



Speech by

**Hon. Paul Lucas**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2007

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## LAND VALUATION AND ACQUISITION

**Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (5.45 pm): I move the following amendment—

That all words after “given” are deleted and the following words inserted:

Further, that this House:

1. Notes the role of Government is to provide infrastructure for essential and important services for the economic and social benefit of the people of Queensland;
2. Notes that in many cases it will be necessary for Government to acquire either voluntarily or compulsorily land to provide for this infrastructure;
3. Notes that Queensland with its decentralised and rapidly growing population has particular challenges that require infrastructure to be provided in a timely and efficient manner;
4. Recognises the comprehensive framework for government acquisitions that includes negotiated settlements, hardship acquisitions and compulsory acquisitions; and
5. Endorses the framework as a fair, reasonable and transparent and compassionate means of providing compensation for landowners whose properties are required in the public interest.

With the state’s population growing by just under 1,800 people a week, it is vital that we deliver not only the services people need but also the infrastructure that is essential to support them. Unfortunately, the state government is not working with a blank slate. We cannot simply pull out a map of an empty Queensland and say, ‘We’ll put a million people here and 100,000 there.’ We cannot point to a spot on the map and say, ‘We want a coalmine there’ and then draw a line for a rail connection to a power plant and a port on the coastline. Indeed, a previous director-general of Main Roads remarked on a number of occasions that it would be relatively simple to solve planning and infrastructure problems in Brisbane if only we could remove every single person from the city for two or three years and put them back where we wanted them after the work was done.

But not all cities are like our master planned capital, Canberra, which in many ways is actually a good thing. Infrastructure needs to be built in and around people and businesses. Indeed, it often needs to be built to service those people and businesses. The major property impacts in my portfolio are, of course, related to acquisitions and easements needed for our dams and our water pipelines. There is no option but to deliver water security for south-east Queensland. Unlike the opposition, the state government will not let this region run dry. We cannot deliver water security without acquiring the property needed for the water infrastructure we are constructing.

I have enormous sympathy for people whose properties are affected by state government projects. At all times we aim to treat those property owners fairly, responsibly and compassionately. For example, Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd is endeavouring to purchase as much land as possible that is needed for stages 1 and 2 of the Traveston Crossing Dam by negotiation. In the event that QWI is unable to negotiate the purchase of properties, it will request the Coordinator-General to acquire them through a compulsory acquisition process. But a total of 66 per cent of the properties needed for stages 1 and 2 of the dam have been acquired under negotiated agreements. Queensland Water Infrastructure also recognises that there is a substantial benefit to the local community in allowing the land required for the

projects to remain in productive use by existing landholders for as long as possible. Therefore, land that is purchased will be leased back to the current owners at favourable rents until they are required for the projects.

The Coordinator-General is also acquiring the land and corridors for the south-east Queensland water grid, involving the acquisition of easements and pieces of freehold land affecting approximately 1,412 properties. In addition, the Coordinator-General has negotiated purchases for the land required for the Bromelton off-stream storage and has commenced acquisition of land and easements for the Cedar Grove Weir infrastructure. In all cases where the Coordinator-General is acquiring land and corridors, he endeavours to acquire by negotiation and resorts to compulsory acquisition only if negotiations cannot be successfully concluded or where there is a very tight time frame in which to deliver the corridor. The Department of Infrastructure and Planning would obtain a valuation of the property to be acquired from a suitably qualified and registered valuer and make an offer to the landowner. Additional costs, usually described as disturbance cost, may be applicable to the purchase and an offer of these amounts would also be made to the landowner. These costs, subject to the acquisition type, may include the owner's legal and valuation costs, removal costs and costs associated with purchasing an additional property. To minimise disruption to landowners and local communities, pipelines are laid wherever possible, from a construction and environmental perspective, in roads and existing public utility easements.

The state government acknowledges that these are rarely easy issues. But we have a system that treats people compassionately and fairly and we will continue to use that system. The member for Gladstone referred to some particular instances in which she believed people were told that they had to get out by 2007 or that things will happen. From my experience as minister for main roads, the people who deal with land acquisitions are very dedicated, honest and fair dinkum people. In fact, people who want to pillory the process and want to have a go at the government—which is fair enough—have a go at the public servants. They say that those public servants have gone out there and threatened people in the community.

These people are public servants. I do not go around negotiating individual land purchases with people. It is funny that we never hear the names of the public servants who are allegedly threatening people. Usually it is governments that are accused of threatening public servants. Most of the public servants I have met in my dealings in government, both as a local member and more importantly as a minister who deals with land acquisitions, are decent and fair dinkum people who have a lot of compassion and regard for the people they deal with. It must be very hard to part with one's property or farm but, regrettably, often that has to happen. We have to have electricity and we have to acquire easements in electorates such as Nanango. In those dealings we expect the government to be open, transparent and fair.