



Speech by

Phil Weightman

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Thursday, 18 October 2007

QUEENSLAND HERITAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (12.14 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the Queensland Heritage and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. In this parliament we have spoken on many occasions about the dramatic changes occurring in Queensland as a result of the rapid economic and population growth, and we have debated major new pieces of legislation developed to plan for and manage this growth, thereby ensuring that Queensland remains the best possible place to live.

In 2009, Queensland will celebrate 150 years of growth and prosperity. As we approach this marker of our maturity as a state, I think it is appropriate that we revisit Queensland's heritage legislation to ensure it provides the best possible protection for our irreplaceable historic heritage. The Queensland Heritage Act 1992 is now 15 years old, and a lot has changed in Queensland in the past 15 years.

Queensland is renowned for the special character created by its natural and cultural features. This character attracts many tourists and residents to our state. Some of Queensland's most highly prized historic features are our iconic timber and tin buildings, our unique country towns, our splendid historic homesteads, our fine selection of nineteenth century government buildings and our distinctive tropical architecture. At times, development pressures associated with rapid growth have created conflict between urban and infrastructure development and the need to preserve for future generations the important elements of our past. Although it is not possible to save every historic place, there is no irresolvable conflict between planning for our future, carrying out exciting new development and valuing and preserving our history.

Many major development projects underway across Queensland demonstrate the social and economic benefits of incorporating rather than demolishing irreplaceable historic elements. For example, projects such as the reinvigoration of the Teneriffe Wool Stores in Brisbane or the redevelopment of Townsville's defunct railway yards demonstrate the value of combining the best in contemporary planning and architecture while giving new life to our heritage places.

This bill supports the move towards a more proactive, strategic and policy driven approach to heritage. It will deliver timely reforms to address criticisms made about the operation of the Heritage Act and help the Queensland Heritage Act strike the correct balance between protecting heritage places, engaging with the community, encouraging appropriate development and respecting the interests and rights of Queenslanders. By emphasising the need for the Queensland Heritage Council to take a more strategic approach, we look to and help plan for the future. By improving the operational efficiency and accountability of administrative and decision-making processes, the bill is a further demonstration of this government's strong commitment to delivering regulatory reform.

The introduction of maintenance provisions to prevent heritage buildings from being deliberately run down and the inclusion of local heritage registers to allow local governments an easier way of managing heritage places in their area will fill gaps in the current regime that have, at times, resulted in the loss of important heritage places. Currently, the legislation contains no proactive management for archaeological

sites, and archaeological finds are often not discovered until they are unearthed during development. Major infrastructure projects, such as Brisbane's bus tunnel, have demonstrated that unexpected archaeological finds do crop up and have the potential to delay essential work.

As part of a cutting-edge approach to archaeological management in Australia, archaeological places are being mapped in the statewide heritage survey. The amendments propose a new category in the Queensland Heritage Register to ensure that information about a site's potential to contain archaeological relics is easily accessible. However, much work remains to be done before we truly have a planned approach to heritage. That is why this government is carrying out a statewide survey of Queensland to identify our heritage and make the Queensland Heritage Register a comprehensive inventory of our most important heritage places. I believe that this comprehensive suite of changes to the Queensland Heritage Act will be broadly welcomed in the community as a balanced approach that provides more efficient processes, respects the rights of affected parties and maintains an effective system to protect Queensland's historic heritage. Consequently, I ask all to support these improvements. I commend the bill to the House.