



Speech by

Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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URBAN LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BILL

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (11.56 am): Housing affordability is the key issue of concern for Queenslanders, especially in the inner northern suburbs of Brisbane. All three levels of government need to make a policy contribution. Unfortunately, especially over the last 10 years, the federal government has damaged housing affordability in a wide number of respects. I think the examples referred to by my colleague the member for Algeester stand as a good account for some of those issues. But more widely in relation to the delivery of a proper tax environment for the development of affordable housing and the funding support mechanisms for those who need social housing, the Howard government has not only dropped the ball but actively ignored the ball and decided to play a game involving a shuttlecock.

When we turn to local government we find a sector which has been greatly challenged for many years by a system now hijacked by political nimbyism and competition for competent planners and so forth with a booming development sector. While I feel sorry for local government—I know many genuine people who are attempting in that sector to address housing affordability—I am sure that reforms both to the structure and legislative environment of local government being currently undertaken by the Beattie Labor government and considered further will be of great assistance.

The first order of business, however, for this House is the state government's policy response and the need to act and respond to the challenges of housing affordability. That is why the announcement by the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure in the form of the Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy is such a welcome start by the Beattie government. It therefore gives me great pleasure to speak in support of the Urban Land Development Authority Bill, which is an important element of the Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy.

At the outset of this second reading debate I was perturbed to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party suggesting that the legislation did not deal with affordable housing. However, I suggest that he examine clause 3(2)(e), where the main purpose of the bill includes the facilitation of 'the provision of an ongoing availability of affordable housing options for low to moderate income households'. Indeed, the member for Robina joined his current leader in suggesting that the legislation was being passed in haste. He suggested that we need to wait and consult with the property development industry. He appeared to do this at the same time as sneering at some in the industry who have the good foresight and sense to be supportive of the government—a fine trick, but I wish the member for Robina well in getting away with it.

The member for Robina specifically mentioned the need to consult with the Property Council of Australia. As many members will appreciate, I know that organisation reasonably well. In those not entirely misty days before my election to this parliament I was the manager of policy and research for the Queensland Division of the Property Council of Australia. The Property Council has a fine tradition of standing up for and advocating strongly in the interests of the development industry and it generally does so in a far more intelligent manner than the sprawl for sprawl sake crowd. The Property Council's membership is drawn from industry players who are about building communities not just turning a buck.

That is why I think the member for Robina and others might find it instructive to look at the sort of views that have been expressed by the Property Council over a long period of time on matters which relate

to the legislation before us. Let me refer to the Property Council's submission to the Queensland government's draft South East Queensland Regional Plan in 2004. In this document the Property Council was responding to proposals about transit oriented development, otherwise known as TODs. I acknowledge that the member for Clayfield made reference to those in his contribution earlier. I understand his views about a TOD that we share in Albion.

The governance principles and concerns that were raised in the Property Council's submission are very similar to those being raised in relation to this legislation and with the proposed Urban Land Development Authority. On page 9 of the Property Council submission to the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan it says—

The Property Council proposed that an authority be established and specifically empowered to assemble land, upgrade infrastructure and approve developments.

Further, the submission outlines the characteristic of its proposed model—

Established under a new legislative instrument which provides maximum flexibility and power to achieve outcomes.

Work with councils, property owners and the community to produce a planning framework for an area—in particular instances the authority may also be the consent authority for development.

Be well resourced and draw staff including the most talented people from the public and private sectors.

Assume responsibility for existing State Government land holdings within the ... area to maximise development opportunities.

A logical and consistent Property Council, which I know it generally is, will see the creation of the Urban Land Development Authority for the purposes of housing affordability as the required extension of South East Queensland Regional Plan. As its submission said in 2004—

The Property Council believes that the importance of successful and influential infill development to an achievable Regional Plan makes a strong governance model mandatory. Further, with the possibility of government contributing land to subsidise the overall cost, an authority with legislative powers is one mechanism that would enable affordable housing options to be included.

I know this submission fairly well and the debates and discussions within the Property Council's membership because I was the author of it. Frankly, it sounds a lot like the proposed authority before us. So I can suggest to the member for Robina who is wanting us to consult further with the Property Council of Australia that it has a fairly good idea what this is all about and that it understands and appreciates that this is the logical extension to addressing the issues of housing affordability as they flow out of the South East Queensland Regional Plan. While talking about the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan let me return to the Leader of the Liberal Party's contribution. Especially let me return to his furphy about a new secret tax. Such a claim is very ill-informed and, not to put too fine a point on it, wrong.

Infrastructure charging was introduced as part of the regional plan when it was confirmed by the government—and indeed this parliament—in 2005. So, two years and two months later the Leader of the Liberal Party is just catching up. Infrastructure charging is not so new and it is not so secret. The application of this infrastructure charging regime in these areas will be welcomed by the industry and will be welcomed by the community. Currently, local government are applying these charges in ways that make the hair stand up on the backs of anyone with an interest in sound development. The lack of transparency, the lack of certainty are addressed by the provisions of the legislation. I can assure the member for Moggill that these provisions are welcome. They are not a scary new tax.

Speaking of horror movie plots, I must make some reference to the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Liberal Party. I refer specifically to his proposal to allow the Local Government Association of Queensland to directly appoint two representatives to the authority. This reminds me of a very unlikely gothic novel. Appointing LGAQ representatives to a body designed to push through and beyond the barriers and hurdles in front of the provision of affordable housing sounds rather like a proposal to appoint Dracula and Renfield to the board of the blood bank. This sounds like a recipe for continued barriers and excuses, not the results which I know the Deputy Premier is focused on.

Consultation with communities has been raised as a key issue and concern by many speakers during the second reading debate. I wish to concur with this. The Urban Land Development Authority represents an outstanding vehicle for better consulted master planned outcomes with a focus on affordable housing. I think that it is important that the authority build on the work of those who have gone before them. This includes the local authorities and in Brisbane includes the work of bodies such as the Urban Renewal Task Force originally the result of national government policy in relation to our urban environment. Some people may remember dimly and darkly that we once had a national government that was committed to our urban environments. Under the Hawke and Keating governments it was clearly Australian government policy to have policy for cities in terms of housing affordability. I therefore urge the Office of Urban Management and the incoming authority to be mindful of the work of the late Trevor Reddacliffe and his Urban Renewal Task Force.

I also have some professional experience in the area of genuine community consultation in relation to good urban design. For instance, I worked closely with the Wynnum Urban Renewal Coalition on their inquiry by design and charrette process which, independent of a paralysed local government, engaged

extensively with the community and created a vision for efficient and effective renewal of a tired and challenged urban landscape.

I commend a web site to all members which documents that process. I suggest members look at this site—www.wynnumcentraltod.com.au. Further, I note that the process won an award from the Planning Institute of Australia as an example of how to do good, engaged urban consultation.

I welcome this government's model which underlines the importance of the authority to keenly engage the community in its vision and in the task of creating genuinely affordable and livable urban communities. Further, I note the comments from the members for Gregory and Maroochydore advocating urban and housing renewal in western and regional Queensland. I agree with them and encourage them to support the legislation to provide for a more activist agent for such change.

I noted the member for Gregory's reservations about what he calls high density housing areas. Well designed urban environments with integrated physical and social infrastructure are vital to all community successes. I can inform the member and his colleagues that this is the case no matter what the density.

My electorate is home to Queensland's first public housing estate. I am talking here about traditional quarter acre blocks and three-bedroom family homes. Those estates were originally designed under Labor governments in the 1940s with park land and public transport at their core and catering for working families. Unfortunately, policies towards public housing under subsequent conservative governments created problems which we are still living with today. These are challenges which can be overcome but they are challenges that were not a function of density. They were not a function of the built form. They occurred despite some idyllic measure of suburbia that they represent as some perfect form of urban form, or should I say urban sprawl. But public housing is indeed a key part of the delivery of good affordable housing.

It is important that in the processes the Urban Land Development Authority undertake it continues to look for engaging, contributing and ensuring that public housing is at the core of delivery of affordable housing in our state. It is the most cost-effective way, and I say that as no fan of socialised answers or socialised economies. That is not my general standpoint on these things. I think that many members of the House would be aware of my views on these things. But effectively public housing is the most cost-effective way of delivering affordable housing in our community. On that point, there are a range of key influences on the issues addressing housing affordability and urban design in our community. I would commend and acknowledge the contribution of the honourable and very learned member for Hervey Bay in his insightful contribution to this debate, especially in relation to household and property size.

Mr McNamara: It was a great speech.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It was. But in conclusion, diversity in built form is the key here—diversity in terms of property use, diversity in terms of tenure, diversity in terms of ownership and tenancy. That is what this measure in relation to housing affordability and specifically the role of the Urban Land Development Authority can provide to Queenslanders. On behalf of the wide variety of Queenslanders who need that full gamut of housing options, I commend the bill to the House.