



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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QUEENSLAND HERITAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (2.35 pm): The Queensland Heritage Act 1992 was breakthrough legislation in the conservation of our state's unique cultural heritage, especially in relation to the built form of that heritage. After decades of destruction—more often than not sponsored by government and more than a few pairs of white shoes—the Queensland Heritage Act was an integral element in the Goss Labor government's reform program for Queensland. Often in an instant iconic Queensland places were swept away. Places such as Cloudland and the Bellevue Hotel are, as the Dean Brothers would say, nothing but memories. So the legislative protection of our heritage places was long overdue. Equally, 15 years after that legislation this update and response to different community expectations and needs is very welcome.

The bill before us amends the 1992 Queensland Heritage Act, the Integrated Planning Act 1997 and makes minor amendments to other relevant legislation. The key elements with regard to the objectives of the bill are that it gives a more strategic role for the Queensland Heritage Council; accountable, transparent and efficient administrative processes for entering places in the Queensland Heritage Register; efficient integrated development assessment; and those issues that speakers before me have made mention of, particularly the identification and protection of historical archeological places and also, and very importantly, as I will mention again in a moment, improved protection for local heritage sites.

The operation of the system under the 1992 act is largely reactive and, as a consequence, there has been a concern that the protection and promotion of places of cultural heritage is not perfectly served by that current system. Notably—and I note the contribution made by the member for Currumbin immediately preceding mine—the nomination of places and properties often occurs as a reaction to a proposal for development. In some cases the owners of the property are unaware of the claims of cultural heritage significance at the time of conception of their proposal. Were the owners aware of the details—were they aware of the cultural, historical and heritage significance of their properties—I would contend that in today's environment it would be more than likely that they would incorporate, accommodate and recognise these issues in their proposals for development.

It is my very strong contention from my experience in working with a range of people in relation to the support of heritage buildings, particularly in our great city of Brisbane, that a living heritage is often a much better heritage. A building that is operated and used for current and useful purposes rather than set aside as some sort of museum piece is a much better way of maintaining and supporting our cultural heritage. I make reference in that sense to the Bellevue, and I have mentioned that before, and I know other speakers, including the member for Waterford, have made mention of it. That historic place was swept away, as I say, by the lack of protection for heritage sites.

I mention that because it is very true that that building was a very degraded and unsustainable building at the time of its destruction. Frankly, it would have been very difficult for it to have been restored. That is something that not many people who opposed its demolition at the time were willing to admit. But the building became like that because the government let it become so. It became like that because it was in the hands of the government—or indeed the parliament—and it was allowed to fall into that state of

disrepair. If there were the declaration and the setting out of that site on the Heritage Register, there would have been a greater incentive to do the maintenance and to give the building that support. That is why I also appreciate and congratulate the minister on the content of this legislation in terms of requirements for remediation and for the protection of heritage places into the future.

Further, in relation to that concern that I had about owners who would sometimes not be aware of the heritage issues associated with their property before they even conceived of their development proposals, these situations would often happen where, as I say, a listing might be sought to be made after a proposal has come forward. It would be a reaction to a proposal. So there would be further confrontation and conflict often inevitably leading to court hearings. That was effectively being encouraged by the circumstance where nominations for listing arose after owners had already expended considerable resources and energy on designing a proposed development. It would be much better, under the regime that we are seeking to bring forward through these amendments, to have a situation in which the heritage values of these places are well known to everyone in the community, and particularly the owners, who would then have the ability to be aware of that and be able to take that into account in any proposals that they may seek to make. That is why the government's action to conduct a comprehensive statewide survey of Queensland's cultural heritage places is extremely important and vital to the implementation of these amendments to the legislation.

I particularly want to acknowledge and thank the minister, and indeed his predecessors in this role, who have been involved in the long consultation around this legislation and the review of the Queensland Heritage Act—Minister Nelson-Carr and Minister Boyle—and for the provision of the \$2.725 million over five years to complete the survey that will make this register a much more comprehensive and transparent document. So rather than relying purely on nominations arising in reaction to development proposals, the more strategic role for the Queensland Heritage Council, based upon this aforementioned statewide heritage survey identifying the places for potential addition to the register, is a much better process and a much more appropriate way for the council to be dealing with things rather than in that totally reactive manner.

A more accountable, transparent and efficient administrative process for entering places in the Queensland Heritage Register is indeed welcomed not only by owners and managers of properties but also by those people who are passionate about protecting our heritage places. I also note the objects of an efficient integrated development assessment system conducted by the EPA rather than by the Heritage Council itself, aside from those instances that I referred to in relation to the Bellevue where the government was the owner of the property.

I wish to turn now to that handful of places that are on the state Heritage Register in my electorate of Stafford. They are indeed a handful, but they are very important places and places that I wish to acknowledge have a right to be on that register. I trust that the survey will potentially identify others that would be appropriate to place on the state register. I also make the distinction between the state register and the provisions in the legislation that allow for a local heritage register.

At Lutwyche in my electorate there is the Conon property, which was built by the McLennan family in 1863. Certainly, to some extent it is under threat from a local neighbourhood plan that has been brought forward by the Brisbane City Council for the Lutwyche Road corridor. But despite the fact that the original property has been subdivided and the house is now surrounded completely by residential development, I think it will be able to be accommodated in that redevelopment and be available for the enjoyment of the wider public, despite the fact that it is a private residence. By 'the enjoyment of the wider public' I mean being open as a vista that the rest of the community can enjoy rather than being hemmed in by scrappy remnant residential development.

I also note in my electorate there is the former Albion Fire Station, which was built in 1927, and which is indicative of a certain period of early 20th century fire brigade buildings around Brisbane. It is a great icon for the local community. I also refer to the Holy Cross Laundry at Woolloowin, which has continuously operated under the auspices of the Sisters of Mercy since 1888. That property is a fantastic piece of heritage architecture, but also imbued into it is an extraordinary history of the community of Brisbane. Of course, the Holy Cross Laundry continues to service a wide range of institutions in greater Brisbane, but it has its traditions in being a place that unmarried mothers would go in our city. In an era when there was a very different attitude to the circumstances in which these women found themselves, they would spend some time working at the laundry and then return home to their communities. It is important for all of us in the community to recognise, understand and interpret the heritage of the Holy Cross Laundry, but it is even better that it can continue to be an operating laundry that continues to provide great services to a large number of people in the community under the auspices of the Sisters of Mercy, who, as I said, have been operating that site since 1888.

There is also the iconic Stafford State School building, which was built in 1948. It is a great example of Department of Public Instruction property. Obviously, it continues to be used for its original purpose and I am sure it will continue to play a great role, no matter what its future might be, in the Stafford community as a real icon for the whole of Stafford.

I note the provisions in the bill that ensure that local authorities establish a local heritage register. I also note the comments of previous contributors to this debate, including those of my colleague the member for Waterford, who expressed concerns about the poor management of heritage sites by some local governments. I am pleased to report that in this instance the Brisbane City Council has been quite good in maintaining a high-quality local heritage register which, by way of completeness, I should note includes one heritage site in my electorate over and above those that are on the state register, and that is the former Stafford Police Station, which is located on the corner of Stafford and Webster roads.

While talking about these local sites, I want to acknowledge an institution that is not listed, because it is a group of people, which is very dear to my heart and with which I am very proud to have been associated, and that is the Chermside and Districts Historical Society. Although the Chermside and Districts Historical Society has not had the great opportunity to be directly involved in the heritage sites that are on the state register or the Brisbane City Council register, it captures and maintains a lot of important heritage not only about local communities and local people in the old Kedron shire but also about buildings—and some buildings that have been demolished.

The Chermside and Districts Historical Society, of which I was the founding president, was able to capture a fantastic record of buildings that had to then go. For instance, there was the Chermside Fire Station and the former Chermside Police Station which went by the by to make way for an earlier extension—not the latest extension—of Westfield Chermside. There has also been more recently—and I will come to this in a little bit more detail in a moment for the minister's benefit—the demolition of the Dawn Theatre, a picture theatre dating from the 1920s, on Gympie Road at Chermside.

I want to pay tribute to a whole range of people from the Chermside and Districts Historical Society who have played a tremendous role in maintaining the history of that local community and obtaining and establishing a terrific archive. They include some members of the executive such as Pat O'Shea, Beverley Isdale, Carol Cunningham, Margaret Argo and Gaye Sparkes, but there are many others who continue to do a lot of great work capturing the history of the local area, maintaining it for future generations and ensuring that we go back and find the places and ensure that there is an awareness about place and the impact that it has had on people over many generations in our community.

In conclusion, I want to encourage the minister to consider some matters for the future in terms of how this area of governance might be further enhanced. I know it is extremely important that we protect the detail of the physicality of many of these heritage sites, but in some instances there are sites—and I mentioned the Bellevue—which are not going to be able to be saved. Some of the sites have structural problems and some have issues surrounding the redevelopment potential of those sites which means they may not necessarily be saved in perpetuity. That is why I would want to flag the concept of acknowledging the past of places in necessary development as it goes on.

For instance, I mentioned the now vacant site where the Dawn Theatre stood on Gympie Road. That place was very important to the cultural life of the north side of Brisbane for a long time. It is situated in an area that is very likely to see significant development in the important Chermside area as part of the South East Queensland Regional Plan. I think it would be appropriate and fantastic to see any redevelopment of that site which might include commercial, retail and indeed residential redevelopment incorporate some level of an acknowledgement, a recalling, an emoting on the redeveloped site of the old facade, which was very famous. There was a high facade at the front of the old theatre with 'Dawn' emblazoned across it. I think it would be terrific to see that incorporated.

Mr Lee: It would be a new dawn.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It would be a new dawn. I acknowledge that interjection from the member for Indooroopilly. That emoting and that acknowledging of place and practice is not always about maintaining the bricks and mortar but about ensuring that the memories continue and that there is a nod to those little things in ongoing development. It is on that note that I congratulate the minister and his predecessors on the review of this legislation and on the very worthwhile changes that are contained within the bill. I commend the bill to the House.