



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 12 November 2009

BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (5.53 pm): I rise to support the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which will introduce two important sustainability measures: firstly, a sustainability declaration when houses, town houses or units are advertised for sale, which we have heard about ad nauseam in this House today; and, secondly, the government's 'ban the banners' initiative that will mean that bodies corporate and developers will not be able to implement by-laws or covenants that restrict the use of sustainable and affordable design features such as light coloured roofs, smaller houses and solar hot-water systems.

I live in the inner city, and I think one of its beauties is the diversity of its building structures. Just the other day I drove up Bradley Street, Spring Hill with the Minister for Transport. We slipped past my office and drove up Bradley Street. There were gorgeous little cottages, the larger type of home and commercial buildings such as shops and offices. There was a mix in a very small area that made it so attractive and so lovely and diverse. New Farm is the same. A lot of these inner-city suburbs have the diversity that adds richness to a suburb.

I am sorry to say that when I leave the inner city and venture to some of these new developments where there are covenants to ensure everyone has the same coloured roof, the same size garage or the same size home, they leave me a bit cold. I am not saying that the people in them do not make a community; however, when people standardise everything, even though it is not needed, I do not know whether it brings a richness to the suburb. That is why our older suburbs of the inner city should be so treasured by Brisbanites and Queenslanders alike.

When it comes to sustainable buildings, Queensland will be leading the nation with the significant new initiatives which will help Queenslanders through financial savings and which will also help achieve the government's Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland's green ambitions. I was most fortunate that the policy that was launched during the election campaign was launched at Green Square in Fortitude Valley, in the Cardno building. It was terrific to be in such a high star rated building. The minister, the member for Stafford, was there at the time. He is well aware of that building. It is a fully sustainable building. It is the way of the future that if these buildings are not going to be built the average purchaser is not going to want to touch the old style buildings. The way of the future is that we will have to become more sustainable; people are going to have to have drawn to their attention what makes their home a sustainable home because if they do not do it it is going to cost them. The consumer is going to want to know that the home actually has these devices when they come to purchase it because it would be an additional cost to install them once they have purchased.

We come to this sustainability declaration. I do believe that Queenslanders will become more aware of their house's energy, water and greenhouse gas emissions and the savings which can be achieved through the introduction of the sustainability declaration. After the member for Gympie spoke for at least 30 minutes on this form, I went to my office and downloaded it. I have to enlighten him that it took me five minutes to fill it out. It is filled out here and was completed in my office in five minutes. He took 30 minutes to rave on about the complexity of this form. Honestly, it sounded like he was filling out one of John Howard's taxation forms!

I tell the member for Gympie that this form is not only easy to fill out; this form also has you thinking. It even got me thinking, which is the purpose of the form. I do want to change a toilet that I have in the laundry and I thought that three stars is probably what I need to get next time. When I saw it on the form, I thought, 'No, three stars is not enough. Next time I do it I am going to go to four stars.' To achieve four stars, the full flush on the toilet needs to be only 4.5 litres rather than six. That got me thinking, but the form only took me five minutes to fill out. My colleagues—the members for Broadwater, Kallangur and Ipswich West—and I have been going through these questions. You do not have to be Einstein to fill it out. Be enlightened, because it is very easy to do this. The member for Gympie clearly is not Einstein if it takes him 30 minutes to talk about a form that I completed in only five minutes.

Not only does this form get the person thinking, but in the future the consumer is going to want to know what sustainability measures they actually have in their home. If people have installed them they should be proud of them. I am proud that I now have insulation, a water tank and many of the other things on this form. If I ever sell my home—and I hope I never do because I love it so much—I would be more than happy and proud to fill out this form to let the prospective purchaser know what I have done to make it a sustainable house.

Anyone who takes umbrage at that has their head in the sand about the value of sustainable homes in the future. But we do not have to scratch very far on the other side of the House to find that they are climate change sceptics to the nth degree. We only have to look at the debate that is happening federally. In this case, it is the National Party taking over from the Liberal Party. We have the old Country Party that is taking over, and we know exactly what its view is on climate change.

Queensland is also leading the nation with the groundbreaking 'ban the banners' policy, as I said. This initiative will mean that bodies corporate will no longer be able to stop people using energy efficient building elements, and I think that is a step definitely in the right direction. I not only congratulate the minister on that step but I also congratulate his department, which I know has worked hard in this area.

This policy is a great policy. I was proud to be there when we launched it. It meets our election obligations. It is a simple policy when it is done in good faith and with good intentions using one's best ability. If you know something, you put it on; if you are not sure, you do not tick the box. It adds no cost whatsoever because it only asks you to tick the things you already have. If you think it is a good idea to go further, then you can go further and put them in if you think it will sell your house. But if you do not want to, you do not have to.

I commend this bill. I commend the minister. I think it is a step in the right direction because, in the future, if you do not have these things, I think the consumer will ask why. I commend the bill to the House.