



Speech by

Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (2.33 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I was going to make only a short contribution in the debate of this bill until I heard members opposite start bashing the virtues of the sustainability declaration. Who would have thought someone would go out there and bash the provision of information to consumers? Who would have thought someone would go out there and bash a wonderful concept that will provide information to consumers? Who would have thought the member for Mermaid Beach would attack the little old ladies from the minister's electorate of Stafford by saying that they would not be able to understand the form? What a patronising approach to say that little old ladies cannot understand a form. It is an insult to them and an insult to the little old ladies in the minister's electorate of Stafford. When you actually look at the form—

Mr Gibson: Get your magnifying glass out for the size six font.

Mr RYAN: Just like the fonts of the LNP membership form, eh? The shadow minister raised a few concerns about a couple of the questions on the sustainability declaration. The first question is: 'Energy equivalence rating if known.' I repeat: 'if known'. So if you do not know it, do not fill it in. It is as simple as that. It cannot get any easier than that. It states, 'Energy equivalence rating if known.' If you do not know it, do not put it in.

Mr Gibson: That's good education. That's great education.

Mr RYAN: It seemed to be very difficult for the shadow minister to actually come to that conclusion. The shadow minister also had a few problems with the potential savings that may be reported in the sustainability declaration. He found it difficult to understand that there would be more than a 100 per cent saving on the average electricity bill. One of the questions asks if you have solar power. I know people in my electorate who have solar panels on their roof and who get money back from their electricity generator because they produce more electricity through their solar panels than they actually consume. So it is possible to have more than a 100 per cent saving.

Mr Gibson: How much money are they getting from the government?

Mr RYAN: Well, that is not the concern you raised. The concern you raised was that you could not work out how they could get more than 100 per cent.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Members will direct their comments through the chair.

Mr RYAN: I think some of the criticisms directed at the sustainability declaration are unfounded and quite patronising to a lot of people out there who will sit down and think, 'Isn't it a good idea to be providing this information to people? Isn't it a good idea that people can take ownership not only about sustainability but about the cost of consuming energy, water and all those other aspects associated with the overall running of a household?' I think it is a great thing and I am pleased that the government has taken a step forward to not only providing information to consumers but making sure that consumers can take ownership of the costs associated with running a household. I feel that all those statements made by

members opposite about the virtues of the sustainability declaration are quite unfounded and quite insulting, particularly to the little old ladies who live in the minister's electorate of Stafford.

Ms Spence: Or any little old ladies,

Mr RYAN: Or any little old ladies. I thank the Leader of the House. I want to talk about two particular issues. The first issue is to do with the amendments related to koala conservation that are contained within this bill. We have heard some recent announcements from the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability about what this state Labor government will be doing to protect koalas in key conservation areas, and it is quite positive news.

As we all know, koala populations in South-East Queensland and in particular in the Morayfield state electorate have been declining for a number of years. These progressive measures which the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability has mentioned—and one particular measure, which is the compulsory acquisition powers for koala habitat outside the urban footprint which is contained in this amending bill—will provide particular protections for this vulnerable species. The package of measures recently announced by the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability will protect priority koala habitat, rehabilitate habitat impacted by development and create new habitat for future koala populations.

Governments can do something or nothing, but of course doing something is better than doing nothing. Again, it is this state Labor government which is doing something. It is this state Labor government which is leading policy development on environmental protection in Queensland. Unfortunately, we have all seen where the opposition stands on issues of environmental protection. In respect of land-clearing bans, opposition members oppose them. In respect of protections for the Great Barrier Reef, opposition members oppose them. In respect of these new conservation measures to protect koalas, I have not heard the shadow minister for climate change and sustainability come out and support them. What can we assume? We can assume that, again, they do not support the environment and they do not support conservation for koalas.

Mr GIBSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks that the member has made to be misleading and offensive, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to withdraw his comments.

Mr RYAN: I withdraw. The silence from the shadow minister for climate change and sustainability indicates where the opposition stands on issues to do with the environment. Only this state Labor government is standing up for the environment. Only this state Labor government is doing something to protect koalas. I take this opportunity to commend the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. I also take this opportunity to commend the hard work and dedication of a local koala care group in my electorate—the Moreton Bay Koala Rescue group—which has been advocating wildlife issues in our community for a long time. I commend them for that admirable work.

I would also like to speak about the transport noise corridor amendments contained within the bill. This is very important to the people of the Morayfield state electorate, because one boundary of the Morayfield state electorate is the Bruce Highway. A lot of traffic and a lot of noise is generated from that roadway. Members of the Morayfield state electorate will be very interested to see there are some great amendments in this bill about transport noise corridors.

The Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill supports the introduction of an innovative new building code to make the approval and construction of residential buildings located near major transport corridors more streamlined and consistent. Noise such as that from traffic can affect the sleep patterns and general health and wellbeing of residents along noise corridors. With intensifying urban development, it is vital that we take precautions to protect the health and amenity of Queensland residents.

This bill supports the introduction of a new building code which will ensure buildings near major transport routes such as major roads and railways are constructed in a consistent manner to achieve adequate levels of noise reduction for occupants. Currently there is no existing state-wide building standard to manage noise impacts generated from outside the building. The state government determines whether there should be any additional building requirements for residential buildings near key transport routes on a case-by-case basis by placing covenants on property titles. Where a building application is made for a property that is the subject of such a covenant, the applicant must have an acoustic report prepared. The government then assesses and conditions each individual application. This process increases time and cost for the final building approvals and provides little up-front or consistent design direction for developers.

Industry consultation during August 2008 showed that there was strong support for developing a new code to mitigate the impacts of transport noise and streamline the existing approval process. The proposed code will set clear and consistent standards for residential buildings in transport noise corridors, where noise levels have the potential to affect residents' health. Transport noise corridors are defined as areas of land located up to a maximum distance of 250 metres from certain local government roads, state controlled roads and railways that are affected by minimum transport noise levels of around 58 decibels.

As an example, a person standing next to Sandgate Road, which receives approximately 33,000 vehicles per day, could be expected to experience noise levels of around 77,000 decibels. The code will provide certainty for developers as well as reduce delays and holding costs. This will deliver appropriate residential developments for a growing Queensland on the ground sooner and with a reliable level of amenity.

The Queensland government is providing leadership in addressing the impacts of transport noise in our increasingly urbanised cities. The proposed mandatory code will be a first for Australia. The code will specifically accept minimum reduction levels of noise coming from the outside of the building. These reductions in noise levels will be able to be achieved through a combination of building design and standard materials. The code was specifically designed to minimise the need for expensive or unusual materials. For example, the code outlines the levels of noise reduction that can be achieved by using generic building material such as masonry walls, solid core doors and standard thicknesses of glazing.

The code will apply only to new residential buildings such as houses, town houses, units and other accommodation buildings like hotels, motels and hostels. Buildings of these types that undergo major renovations will also need to comply where practicable. Building certifiers will be able to assess plans and approve construction of buildings if the proposal meets the requirements of the code. This will allow for faster development time frames, and in practice it means that work can begin on the ground without the need for expensive reports to be compiled and considered. This will provide economic benefits from greater developer certainty and clearer investment returns as well as cost savings from more streamlined and transparent building assessment processes.

In order to achieve consistent standards across the state and simplify the process for local governments currently tackling the issue of transport noise in residential developments, the bill will give local governments the ability to designate areas near certain roads as transport noise corridors to which the new code will apply. This will be an entirely voluntary process for local governments and is designed to help them manage urban growth.

The government will also be able to designate land near certain state controlled roads and railways as transport noise corridors. The bill gives the Department of Transport and Main Roads the power to place administrative notations on property titles and to notify potential purchasers that the property is noise affected and subject to the proposed code. Consolidated information for all designated transport corridors will be provided to the relevant local governments to be noted in planning schemes.

Along with notations on property titles, this will enable easy identification of transport noise corridors by building certifiers and prospective purchasers and developers so that new residential developments within identified corridors are constructed to meet the requirements of the proposed code. The government is also developing a user-friendly website whereby free searches can be conducted based on the addresses or lot plan numbers to determine if the property is located within a designated transport noise corridor. Developers and potential purchasers will be able to enter the property details and instantly find out whether the new code applies, including what the requirements will be for noise reduction. Properties which have existing covenants will also be subject to the proposed code. Once the proposed code comes into effect, there will no longer be a need for government involvement in the building application process to ensure noise attenuation requirements are complied with in covenanted properties.

In summary, this bill will support the implementation of a new building code for residential buildings located in transport noise corridors and give state and local government authorities the power to designate certain roads and railways to which the code will apply. This will ensure a consistent standard for noise reduction is set across the state to help achieve indoor noise levels that do not impact upon the health and wellbeing of Queensland residents. By streamlining the development process, the bill will reduce costs, uncertainty and time associated with developments of this nature.

I commend the minister, his staff and departmental staff on their hard work in bringing this bill to the parliament. This bill delivers on a range of election commitments of this state Labor government and will effect a number of key environmental building and development priorities for the people of the Morayfield state electorate and, more broadly, the people of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.