



Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Hansard Tuesday, 15 September 2009

SUSTAINABLE PLANNING BILL

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (3.54 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Sustainable Planning Bill 2009. First of all, I congratulate the shadow minister and member for Gympie for his outstanding contribution so far and for what I know is still to come. When we talk about infrastructure and transport infrastructure, it is amazing that we all seem to be singing the same song. TransLink has ceased a bus service in my area. I was almost promised a week or so ago that it was thinking about returning the bus service to the area. Indeed, I was even given an undertaking that by Friday of last week I would have some answer on that. Numerous phone calls were made yesterday and today, and I still do not have an answer. TransLink has a lot to answer for, and I support the two previous speakers in their views that TransLink should get its act together.

As I said, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Sustainable Planning Bill. My contribution is a straightforward one. It relates to infrastructure charges. I have become aware, as the member for Surfers Paradise mentioned, of an incredible example of infrastructure charges based on planned density, not actual density. The application has been made to the Gold Coast City Council for the construction of a workshop as an addition to an already council approved and operating motor vehicle sales centre. In the construction phase of the workshop, there is no doubt that jobs would be sustained in the construction industry. Once complete, this workshop would add an estimated 10 new jobs to the employ of the motor dealer—full-time jobs, not part-time jobs and not one-hour jobs. These full-time jobs are desperately needed in the local area. They are jobs that would see a boost to the local economy. 'Jobs, jobs, jobs.' Where have we heard that before?

Why haven't these jobs been created? It is due to infrastructure charges that have been determined under the only priority infrastructure plan that has been signed off: the Gold Coast City Council priority infrastructure plan—the one that has been alluded to by the member for Gympie and the member for Surfers Paradise. I am told that this case has been described by those in the industry as one of the most absurd assessments ever seen. In assessing the application, the Gold Coast City Council applied the maximum priority infrastructure plan charges of over \$2 million. These were based on planned density, not actual density. Indexed at today's costs, the figure is over \$2,200,000. This is not for a \$10 million building—\$2,200,000 in infrastructure charges is for the construction of a workshop at a cost of less than \$1 million. The total cost including infrastructure charges is \$3 million for a building that would provide 10 new jobs in the area. Some \$300,000 per new job is totally unviable.

This case has been going on for two years. Let me give you a brief example of how these amazing figures can be conjured up. Let us assume that an application is made to build a workshop as an extension to an existing approved facility. However, we find that the particular block of land could have a multistorey building on it. The Gold Coast City Council, under the priority infrastructure plan, applied the charges as though a multistorey building were being built. Clearly, you would say, the property owner has a choice: build a viable workshop that will accommodate an existing tenant's needs or, after the expiry of the tenant's lease and any option to renew, consider the possibility of building a multistorey building, except there is not a choice. The infrastructure charges being applied make the workshop totally unviable. The result is an

unhappy landowner, an unhappy tenant, no new jobs and no additional services offered to the local community.

If sensible infrastructure fees were charged two years ago, I have no doubt that this project would be complete and those 10 full-time jobs would have been created. We see comments and opinion in the local Gold Coast papers where the Gold Coast City Council blames the state government for these charges. The inference is that it—the council—has no choice. I call on the minister to come out and state categorically that the state is not holding the Gold Coast City Council to ransom by forcing it to charge these fees at the maximum amount. I have no doubt that once this supposed impediment is removed we can get on with the job of building on the Gold Coast.

We can see some jobs, jobs, jobs created on the Gold Coast. We can see the much needed infrastructure developed around the northern Gold Coast corridor. The Coomera town centre is desperately needed. Many developments in and around the town centre are needed.

The development of a workshop to create 10 new jobs and provide services to the local community is also desperately needed. We can only hope that common sense will prevail on this one and, for that matter, we can only hope that all development applications on the Gold Coast are treated fairly and equitably so that we can get on with building the northern Gold Coast and get the northern Gold Coast moving.

In closing, I know that the bill has many worthwhile elements to it. However, I also note that the member for Gympie will be moving amendments necessary to provide more clarity and certainty to some of those elements. I look forward to the government's support of the opposition's amendments to this bill. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.