



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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SUSTAINABLE PLANNING BILL

Mr SORENSEN (Hervey Bay—LNP) (5.23 pm): I rise to speak to the Sustainable Planning Bill. The Integrated Planning Act, which was introduced in 1997, will be replaced by the Sustainable Planning Bill 2009. While the minister told us back then that the Integrated Planning Act was going to streamline development processes, it has become slow and unclear and causes dissatisfaction between councillors, developers and, most of all, the community.

The layers of bureaucracy have caused major blow-outs and these costs are usually passed on to house buyers. Costs will blow out even more because of the climate change provisions of the bill. How will councils know what to implement into their planning scheme if there are no guidelines to follow? Will councils be forced to conduct studies into the effects of climate change in their area, and who will pay for this in the long run? Will there be infrastructure charges on new developments and those sorts of things? It goes on.

In my area climate change will be defined within the coastal management plan. How will climate change affect the definitions of coastal tidal areas, especially in the coastal zones, coastal hazards, physical coastal changes, tidal waters, coastal resources, coastal building lines, coastal management districts, vegetation, storm tide inundation and redevelopment areas that already exist on the coast and which will be redeveloped over the years? There are also the maritime developments to consider. It is a big thing to provide maritime facilities in coastal areas such as boat ramps, marinas and even coal ports and that sort of infrastructure. How will climate change affect the agricultural industry?

Another thing to consider is state coastal land. Many councils put infrastructure on the foreshore and those types of things. How is climate change going to affect those councils and us in the future? Who is going to foot the bill at the end of the day? Then there are the private landowners along the foreshore of our Queensland coastline to consider. How will it affect them in the long run? How will the government ensure those coastal landowners comply with all future new regulations?

What will the RL levels be in the future and will councils have to do the engineering modelling and come up with the answers? At the moment most of the RL levels in Hervey Bay are about four metres. It will be interesting to see what the future brings in relation to RL levels and floor levels for buildings. It will be interesting to see who pays for that at the end of the day. It would be good to be able to support the local governments in that area.

At the end of the day, what is development? It means different things to different councils. In some councils it means developing a mine, which brings both prosperity and financial problems. The mine will become a major asset to the community but the roads and other infrastructure then become a liability to the local government. I have known councillors in western areas who have complained bitterly in the past about mining coming to their area. They get very little out of mining in terms of rateable properties because there are active and inactive mines. It is a real issue out there and it is something that has been brought to my attention. The councils end up with the liability of maintaining the roads due to the heavy traffic created by the mines. While the state government receives a windfall in collecting the royalties, the councils usually

have to pick up the maintenance, especially of the road infrastructure and other social needs in these areas.

It will be quite interesting to see what happens. In other areas it also means ports and marinas, which brings similar problems. The infrastructure needs to be in place in order to export the material that is mined. At the end of the day, the infrastructure needs to be in place which creates the jobs and then the people move into those areas. It is kind of interesting to follow it right through from one end to the other. Whichever way we look at it, other areas such as national parks and World Heritage listed areas are really tourist developments.

This development creates a lot of traffic and industry. It is no different from any other kind of development. The tourism industry is a very large industry in Queensland and it is an industry that we should promote all the time. The tourism industry is the major industry in the area that I represent and attracts large numbers of people. In some cases councils have to maintain the infrastructure so that people can get to and from these developments.

Most people think of a developer as being a big developer, but in a lot of cases a developer is a small family who is wanting to subdivide one block into two. They need some sort of security. I hope that this bill will provide that security for those people who just want to subdivide their block into one or two lots. A lot of such applications go to the council. Not all developers are big multinational companies. They are just families who have invested in a small piece of property. At the end of the day, all they really want is to have a superannuation scheme and to make some money.

My view is that tourism creates industries which attract people to areas such as the area that I represent. One only has to look at the development magazine, which states that Queensland has eight out of 10 of the fastest-growing cities in Australia. I will run through them. Hervey Bay is expected to grow by 87 per cent by the year 2027. Gladstone is expected to grow by 56 per cent, the Gold Coast-Tweed is expected to grow by 54 per cent, the Sunshine Coast is expected to grow by 52 per cent, Cairns is expected to grow by 50 per cent, Brisbane is expected to grow by 45 per cent, Mackay is expected to grow by 44 per cent and Townsville is expected to grow by 43 per cent over that period.

Industry is an important part of my home town, and the retirement industry in my area is quite important. I hope that we do not neglect the infrastructure that we need for some people who do not have a lot of money. We need caravan parks. In my area a developer tried to rezone a caravan park into something else. There were 38 relocatable homes in that caravan park. We managed to block that. I hope the minister could use the call-in powers and call in some of those types of developments to provide a type of housing that we need for people who do not have the money to buy multimillion-dollar homes.

We also need to make sure that we can build nursing homes for high-care and low-care patients. In some areas permission is not granted for those developments because the developers want to construct buildings two and three storeys high to make building these facilities viable. They cannot build those types of buildings in a residential area. We really have to look at that issue when the building is going to be a retirement village or a nursing home.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mr SORENSEN: I have. I have tried to work hard towards it. I am glad to have that interjection, because we have to take care of the elderly people in our community. I think that is one way of going about that. Sometimes it is very hard to get approval from the council to construct retirement villages, but we need relocatable home parks in our communities as they provide affordable accommodation. I know that the government owns one of the caravan parks in Hervey Bay. That caravan park provides a lot of low-cost housing. We have to make sure that we have those types of developments in our planning schemes.

In terms of the tourism industry, Fraser Island, which is a World Heritage listed area, needs infrastructure such as marinas and boat ramps to make sure that we provide the facilities to maintain the tourist industry there. Then comes the motels and the developments to house all of those people who visit the island. Some 350,000 visitors visit Fraser Island every year. We really have to make sure that the infrastructure is in place so that the tourism industry can house those people who want to visit Fraser Island.

In terms of the retail industry, some of the bigger developers of shopping centres in fast-growing areas are copping a hiding through the infrastructure charges that are being placed upon them in order to develop these retail outlets. This also occurs in the building industry in terms of housing developments.

The Sustainable Planning Bill will replace the Integrated Planning Act, which we were told was going to solve all the problems. Will this bill solve all the problems? I guess it will not, but in some areas I guess it will. Some of the problems that I experienced in the past related to overlays. For example, a builder wanted to build a house on a property but he had a vegetation overlay. One of the council officers said that he did not want to remove the trees. Another officer who looked after the fire services said that the builder had to

have a firebreak. So how can we have one person saying one thing and another person saying another thing? They are some of the problems that we have with overlays. I think that really needs sorting out.

I believe that the call-in powers will protect some assets, such as airports, sewage treatment plants and even some of our flood plains where engineers say that they can engineer a drain through the flood plains. I believe that if we have a natural drainage system there we should leave it there and use it as a vegetation area, which could take all the water. We would not have to build concrete drains and things like that. It would be environmentally friendly and we could have vegetation corridors throughout the city and things like that.

What worries me most about the call-in powers is when the next election comes around and some green group finds a rocket frog somewhere on a proposed development. Will the government call it in just before an election just to be popular? But I believe that the call-in power should be used on the Traveston Dam. It will affect Fraser Island, it will affect the Great Sandy Straits and it will affect other World Heritage listed sites.

Mr Shine: You would be in favour of the amendment.

Mr SORENSEN: I am in favour of looking after the Great Sandy Straits. I am very conscious of the Great Sandy Straits and what it means to Hervey Bay.

To give members an idea of the amount of red tape that we have, I refer to research done by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Queensland has a total of 70,784 regulations, instruments and papers. Queensland has the most of all the states. In terms of the number of business regulations by type, we have 93 and New South Wales comes in at 75. So members can see that we really have a lot of red tape and in a lot of areas we are a bit overgoverned in Queensland.

This bill sets out a strategic planning framework at state, regional and local levels. It will be a 25-year plan, which I believe is a good thing. There is also a 20-year community vision, a 15-year infrastructure plan to service projected growth and a 10-year plan for development, which I believe is a little bit short, because 10 years is not very long. There is also a five-year working plan to deliver serviceable land. I have seen some developers go through the courts and it takes them more than five years to get their development applications approved.

Chapter 5 refers to designated land. At the end of the day, it is good to have designated land as long as you compensate the owner of that property at a reasonable price to make sure that they are not disadvantaged. The Building and Development Dispute Resolution Committee will give smaller investors an opportunity to question some of the conditions that have been put on some of their small developments. So it will give them a way of avoiding the huge court costs which can accrue just on an application for a subdivision or two.

I have heard comments from those in the legal profession that we are heading towards expanding the role of state government by the implementation of standard planning scheme provisions and the expansion of reserve powers, conditions and call-in powers. As for IDAS, at the end of the day there is still the application stage as well as the information and referral stage. It can take years to get through those processes. Departments do not coordinate on many aspects of an application, which causes hold-ups in developments. This is a real problem. A matter is referred first to one department and then another. Some departments will ask for a report on something and then when that report is finished they will ask for another report and then another report. I have seen the situation where there were three requests for reports one after the other and wondered why the three reports could not have been done all at once.