



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 9 March 2010

VALUATION OF LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (5.01 pm): I rise to support the Valuation of Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010. I want to start by thanking all of my constituents and business representatives who have either spoken to me directly or contacted my office regarding this legislation. Obviously, they were stirred into action by what I believe was somewhat misleading information regarding the true objects of this bill, and I am looking forward to confirming the information I have forwarded to these people who contacted my office.

I know that land tax can be a very controversial issue. Nobody likes paying land tax and, with valuations increasing in recent times, it is not surprising that recent misleading media statements brought to the surface for many residents concerns regarding how they may be impacted and gave them the opportunity to highlight what they think about land tax in general. I have listened to what they have said and read all of the emails and correspondence and can assure my constituents that I have passed on their concerns, and I am pleased that the government listened to those concerns and we have the bill that we are debating this afternoon.

However, it is pleasing today to outline exactly what this bill aims to achieve and to get the record straight with regard to these amendments—clearly, amendments that have not been understood by those opposite when we take into account the recent contribution by the member for Currumbin. Firstly, as advised to those who contacted my office, this bill does not change the way land is valued in Queensland. In fact, it aims to achieve the status quo and to validate valuations which would have been impacted upon due to the recent Court of Appeal decision that threatened to turn past processes upside down. Also, this decision would have had drastic consequences for local governments, where it has been estimated that up to \$600 million in rate repayments to commercial and industrial property owners would have to be made if the bill were not enacted.

This bill will ensure that, with the way homes are valued, property owners will see no change to the manner in which their valuations are prepared. This provides certainty and delivers an outcome which means no new taxes for property owners—I repeat: no new taxes for property owners—and no big refunds from state or local governments. Validating valuations already issued is the most sensible course of action to take, and I support this bill in doing so. I just do not understand why one would be opposing this bill as amended. In addition, this bill will ensure that the method for valuing property is crystal clear now and into the future by completing the 2010 valuation with certainty.

I also note that, as a preliminary report tabled by the minister today demonstrates, obviously due to the global financial crisis valuations have generally decreased—a situation that even the Property Council of Australia Queensland branch agrees with, as it has stated that it expects that 2010 valuations will generally be lower because of the GFC.

I also welcome recent statements made by the Premier and the minister, who have committed to going further and introducing a simpler method of valuation—site value—for non-rural lands from 2011. Site value methodology will bring Queensland into line with other Australian states from 2011 valuations for

all property owners except those in rural areas. I also welcome the commitment to introduce an independent statutory position of Valuer-General to lead Queensland's State Valuation Services. I note that the member for Currumbin described this bill as 'repugnant'. She clearly has not kept up to date, because I note that the Property Council of Australia Queensland branch has stated that it is pleased that this bill being debated today will address many of the concerns raised by industry. In fact, I have in my hands its press release, issued today, which says 'Queensland property owners breathe sigh of relief'—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Member for Lockyer!

Ms GRACE: It goes on to say how pleased it is with what the bill we are debating today contains. Just keep up, those opposite; just keep up. It is not that hard. It states—and I agree—that this bill will ensure that the rights of those appellants with objections or appeals before the courts are protected and that settlement negotiations will continue under the current act until 30 June 2010. It is also pleased with—not averse to—the government's commitment to a full review of the state's valuation system for the 2011 round of valuations, with a focus on site valuations.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer, that is your final warning.

Ms GRACE: I know that it is looking forward to being consulted over the coming months in relation to this review, and I support full and proper engagement with industry as outlined by executive director Steve Greenwood—an ex-constituent of mine, I might add—in his media statement of today.

To set the record straight, I believe it is important to outline that Queensland has the highest threshold and lowest maximum rate of any state for individual taxpayers with regard to land tax. Queensland's land tax effort as measured by the Commonwealth Grants Commission was 30 per cent below the national average in 2008-09, and this is the latest independent comparative data. So all of those statements made by those opposite are misleading and untrue. This bill as amended addresses many of the concerns raised with government. As the Property Council of Australia's media release states—

I would like to acknowledge the strong leadership shown by the Premier in our final negotiations which ensured that a satisfactory resolution could be reached.

Mr Seeney: You don't believe that!

Ms GRACE: That is what it has said.

Mr Seeney: You don't believe that!

Ms GRACE: I do not have to believe it; I am merely stating what the Property Council of Australia Queensland branch has said. So we have industry pleased in coming on board by welcoming the amendments but, as usual, all we get from the other side is carping and nonsupport for a bill that addresses industry concerns, protects ordinary ratepayers as outlined by the LGAQ and commits to surety for current appeals or objections currently before the court.

Yet again, from those opposite there is no policy alternative. Nothing has been put. There is no alternative plan and no idea. Member for Callide, you did not offer one—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! I would ask the member for Brisbane Central to direct her comments through the chair.

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I apologise. The member for Callide gave no idea whatsoever in his speech in regard to this bill. This bill indeed provides for what the government has set out to do. Those members opposite have come into this House and made misleading and untruthful statements and, unfortunately, the member for Clayfield likes to play the person and not the ball. This bill provides exactly what the government intends to do. It protects the ordinary mum-and-dad ratepayers who would have been severely impacted by the recent Court of Appeal decision, as confirmed by the LGAQ. This bill maintains the status quo by validating valuations that have already been issued, ensuring no new taxes and no unsustainable impacts on local governments. I say that for the benefit of the member for Indooroopilly, who seems to think that all the taxes in the world are going to rise and that the whole world is going to fall in. As for the member for Buderim, my goodness! All businesses are going to leave Queensland and go somewhere else. Unfortunately, land taxes there are higher than they are in Queensland.

We also have people who are concerned about rent increases. Those opposite have talked about rent increases, yet not one of them has made any statement in here on behalf of unit owners or unit renters who have experienced rate increases beyond their unbelievable imagination. Of course, in regard to that issue there has been no comment from those opposite on the impact of those increases.

This bill also protects appellants' rights currently before the court to be settled under the current act until 30 June. This bill is essential for all the reasons that I have outlined. I commend the bill to the House.