



Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Thursday, 11 February 2010

MOTION

South East Queensland Regional Plan

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (8.05 pm): I move—

That the House—

1. notes the regulatory provisions of the South East Queensland Regional Plan (the plan) that was tabled in the Legislative Assembly as part of the Plan on 7 October 2009; and
2. ratifies the regulatory provisions of the plan under section 66(3) of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 speaks volumes about the Queensland we all want to see over the next two decades. The plan is about securing green space for communities and improving our lifestyle by reducing travel time between home, work and play. It forecasts the work that needs to be done to keep the region evolving and adapting to the different challenges that it will face as it continues to grow.

There has been much debate about the growth of Queensland and, in particular, the South-East Queensland region. There are some who say that population estimates are untenable while others say that there is more than enough room to accommodate them if we do it right. Doing it right is what the Queensland government wants to do. Our challenge is getting Queensland ready to support the expected increase in population to ensure that our quality of life is not compromised.

There is much speculation about what we can do about growth and how we deal with the pressures and the opportunities that this growth brings. In a wider context, South-East Queensland is projected to have an estimated resident population of 4.4 million, accounting for around one-fifth of Australia's population. These are not targets to be achieved; these are estimates that we need to prepare for.

Population growth in South-East Queensland is driven by a number of national trends including the steady and increasing overseas migration intake, which is the largest factor, a movement of population from interstate, the move to coastal living based on climate and lifestyle values, the increased reliance on knowledge based tourism, manufacturing and service sector employment located in large urban centres, and an increase in the natural birth rate—something we have been discussing so far this evening.

Statutory plans provide a strategic direction for getting the growth into the right areas. The South East Queensland Regional Plan includes land covered by 11 local governments. Its regional landscape is a rich mix of bushland, beaches, ranges and paddocks, rivers and lakes. The South-East Queensland region covers 22,890 square kilometres, stretching 240 kilometres from Noosa in the north to the Queensland-New South Wales border in the south and 160 kilometres west to Toowoomba. The plan identifies growth areas, principal activity centres, and employment and industry centres for state agencies. It also highlights future education, recreation and health precincts across the region. It provides the direction to local councils needed to manage their area in the context of the wider region. Growth generates demand for new jobs, new housing and the provision of a wide range of supporting

infrastructure and services from arterial roads and public transport to local parks, shops and community facilities. The growth also creates economic and social opportunities for the residents of the region.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan is the Queensland government's long-term plan to guide appropriate growth, change and development in the region. Since it was first introduced in 2005, the South East Queensland Regional Plan has been very successful in protecting more than 85 per cent of the region from further urban development and improving housing densities and integrated residential, employment and infrastructure planning. The plan received a National Award of Excellence from the Planning Institute of Australia. The South East Queensland Regional Plan sits within the Queensland land use planning system and reflects and informs state planning policy and priorities as well as local government plans and policies. It is both a statutory and a strategic plan with a planning and implementation time frame over 20 years with a provision to be reviewed every five years.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan was prepared through consultation and cooperation between state, local government and the wider community to address the region's values, challenges and opportunities. The South East Queensland Regional Plan establishes a framework to manage projected growth, not just accommodate it. It utilises the following key tools to manage growth: establishing an urban footprint as a means to control unplanned urban expansion; promoting a compact urban form by setting dwelling targets within existing urban areas for each local government area; supporting growth in the western corridor; allocating land to accommodate future urban growth supported by a range of delivery processes; defining principles and policies to guide growth, change and development; linking the plan with state infrastructure and service delivery; and informing local government infrastructure programs and budgets, and providing certainty to the private sector. The plan strikes a balance between population growth and the need to protect the lifestyle that residents of the south-east value and enjoy by guiding development patterns in the region over the next two decades.

From 2006 to 2031, an additional 754,000 dwellings will be required to cater for the expected population growth in South-East Queensland and provide housing choices for a more diverse population. Again, this is not a target that the government has set for itself; it is an estimated projection which we need to prepare for. The SEQ Regional Plan seeks to proactively manage this dwelling demand by identifying a preferred settlement pattern. The plan redistributes the projected dwelling demand throughout South-East Queensland based on a preferred settlement pattern of relieving pressures on the coast, redistributing growth to the western corridor around Ipswich, promoting renewal and transit oriented development in existing centres, redeveloping infrastructure rich areas and maximising residential yield in major new residential communities.

As I said, the settlement pattern protects 85 per cent of the region by restricting large scale and inappropriate urban development outside the urban footprint. This ensures that development occurs within the urban footprint in locations that provide ready access to infrastructure and services, especially those that help to reduce car dependency. A strong focus of the settlement pattern is looking at redirecting growth to existing urban areas while maintaining a supply of broad-hectare land for the development of new communities. Notably, the SEQ Regional Plan sets an infill target for the additional dwellings that will be required in SEQ by 2031. Nearly half are to be built in established urban areas through infill and redevelopment—the renewal communities that our cities need.

Clearly, not all future dwelling demand will be met in this manner. Development of master planned communities on broad-hectare land will also accommodate a significant share of dwelling activity in addition to dwelling construction on existing vacant residential lots. Broad-hectare opportunities are distributed throughout the region. However, the SEQ Regional Plan aims to ensure that an increased proportion of the region's population and employment growth is accommodated in the new communities of the western corridor, thus reducing growth pressures on the coast.

Let me make it clear: the plan is not about wall-to-wall skyscrapers across the region, as we might hear from some quarters; it is about giving people a choice. There will always be room for a home on a good sized block with a traditional backyard, just as other people will opt for the convenience of living in higher density areas around activity centres or along our public transport corridors.

The SEQ Regional Plan's balanced approach to settlement and compact urban development contains growth pressures that preserve the region's landscape, natural areas, open space and prime agricultural land. It is also cheaper and more efficient, as existing infrastructure is used before new houses need to be built further out. Placing urban uses in close proximity in and around centres makes healthy alternatives to driving, such as walking or cycling, more viable. Less fuel is used for regular travel and fewer greenhouse gases are emitted.

As I mentioned earlier, the SEQ Regional Plan is both a strategic and a statutory planning instrument. The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 state planning regulatory provisions were established to support the regional plan. The regulatory provisions apply to the SEQ region and assist in advancing key elements of the SEQ Regional Plan. The regulatory provisions have effect under

the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and are used in conjunction with the other relevant state and local planning requirements including, very importantly, local government planning schemes.

Broadly, the regulatory provisions apply to particular development applications in South-East Queensland. Key elements of the regulatory provisions are: a regional land use map that indicates which areas will be protected as regional landscape and rural production areas or rural living areas and which are designated as the urban footprint; restrictions on urban development outside the urban footprint; prohibiting inappropriate subdivision of land outside the urban footprint; and protecting areas identified to accommodate future urban growth from inappropriate development until suitable planning has been undertaken.

Whilst there are some development restrictions in place, it is important to note that the regulatory provisions maintain existing use rights for land outside the urban footprint. This ensures that significant activities, such as agricultural production, access to natural resources, water storage, tourism, outdoor recreation and nature conservation, will continue. Further, the regulatory provisions facilitate a diverse rural economy by supporting small and medium scale tourist, sport and recreation and rural industries in that regional landscape and rural production area and rural living area.

Developing the regional plan is not the end of the process. It needs to be implemented. Implementing the plan involves both state and local governments together with the support of the community, industry and regional stakeholders. Councils play a vital role as the planning authority to shape their region to best service their communities within the overarching guide of this regional plan. The SEQ Regional Plan will also be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that it continues to provide the most appropriate framework for managing growth and change in South-East Queensland.

The state government recognises apprehension about growth in the community. We understand that further action is required to address emerging challenges within the community, such as housing affordability, traffic congestion, climate change and employment generation. The Queensland government has implemented several actions to meet these challenges. We have, however, also gone a step further. Last last year, the Premier announced that the Queensland government will hold a growth summit in late March 2010. The growth summit is a great opportunity to bring together people from across South-East Queensland—and indeed across the whole state of Queensland—to help us lead the nation into the next period of prosperity. It will also help us continue to enjoy the best lifestyle in Australia.

A high-level advisory team has been appointed to play an important role in the summit. This team of experts has a wealth of knowledge in areas such as population trends, climate change, architecture, planning and industry more generally. So strong representation at the summit is anticipated from people in South-East Queensland and other regions, including mayors and other community leaders.

Regional planning plays a key role in helping Queensland meet the challenges associated with managing rapid growth, population change, economic development and the increasing demand for infrastructure across multiple local government areas. On that note, I commend the motion to the House.