




Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 25 May 2011

SUSTAINABLE PLANNING (HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES REFORM) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (12.31 pm), continuing: The government has also recently completed the development of its policy for pool safety management plans. These plans will provide commercial businesses like hotels and resorts, for example—and there are many hotels in my electorate of Brisbane Central—with the flexibility of choosing an alternative to a pool barrier while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the system and, of course, keeping child safety paramount. These applications will be assessed by the Department of Local Government and Planning based on a range of issues affecting the safety of young children. This is, I believe, a good part of the legislation which enables hotels, because of the nature of the way they have been built, to have these plans while, of course, keeping the safety of the child paramount.

The government had previously legislated that all swimming pools in Queensland would be placed on the register by 4 May 2011, giving households six months from the introduction of the laws to complete the process of giving their pool details, either via the internet or by a telephone call, to the Department of Local Government and Planning. To assist in the processing of registering pools, the government has also asked that all Queensland councils provide their existing pool data in bulk to be uploaded into the register. It has been great to see that councils have played their role in this. As I have said previously, I think about 230,000 pools have now been registered. I believe that councils have assisted in over 200,000 of those pools coming on to the register. So we are going to get a clear picture of exactly how many swimming pools there are in Queensland, hopefully within a relatively short period.

However, the government is very aware of the issues confronting Queensland families as a result of the January floods and Cyclone Yasi. These natural disasters have meant that state and local government resources have rightly—and I emphasise rightly—been focused on reconstruction activities, and over recent weeks it had become obvious that councils and pool owners would need more time to populate the register. Quite clearly, efforts are focused on rebuilding—and we make no apologies for that—and that has had an impact on the number of registrations that are taking place. We are keen to assist individuals, businesses and government in all aspects of the recovery process, including dealing with pool registration. The best and simplest way is to provide a six-month amnesty. This bill provides for that amnesty. This is a common-sense approach that will mean that all pools will now need to be registered by 4 November 2011. So we have a six-month grace period—pardon the pun—for pool owners to register their pools. They have to register their pools by 4 November 2011.

There is no other change to the swimming pool laws, and this amnesty does not impact upon the safety of our children as the No. 1 priority. All swimming pools are still required to be inspected at the point of sale and lease and the owners provided with a pool safety certificate. This ensures that every day more pools in Queensland meet the government's strict new standards. Indeed, every week since 1 December 2010 over 400 pools have been inspected by licensed pool inspectors and certified as compliant, and this is expected to continue into the future. I think it is fantastic that they are meeting these new standards. I know that that great advocate for child water safety particularly around pools, the great Laurie Lawrence,

would be very much in favour of these new barriers, making sure that children cannot get through and drown in pools. It would have to be one of the most tragic circumstances as a parent to find your child in a pool, and unfortunately many parents, carers and relatives have had to do that.

The decision to extend the registration date does not affect other parts of the pool laws and will not compromise, as I have said and I want to stress, the safety of children which is paramount. The government will continue to ensure that the public is kept informed of changes to pool safety laws. I intend to let all of my residents in Brisbane Central know of the six-month amnesty. As I said previously, I have many pools in my electorate of Brisbane Central and I intend to let pool owners know that they now have six months, up to 4 November 2011, to register their pool if they have not already done so.

Additionally, we will continue to work with the outstanding councils—those who have not yet provided data. We will continue to work with them so that they can gather the information at a local level and feed it into the register so that we can get a really good picture of the situation relating to pools in Queensland. By 4 November all pool owners should have checked the register to ensure their swimming pool has been included. I urge people in Mackay who have a swimming pool to make sure theirs is on the register. Once this is done, pool owners have until 2015 to comply. So there is a good period of time—four years—if their pool does not comply. They have until 2015 to comply with the new pool laws, or earlier of course if the property is sold or leased before then. I think this is a really good incentive. It gives people a lot of time. If they are renovating and if they are not selling or leasing, they have a fairly good time to budget as a family to make sure their pool fencing complies with the new laws.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the new pool safety laws are a great step forward for child safety in Queensland, particularly around water. The government has made impressive strides in implementing a complex but necessary reform and, as more pools in Queensland become compliant, we hope to continue to reduce the number of tragic child drownings in this state. This is what I would applaud. I know that many people may think changing their pool barrier is a bit of an imposition but if, at the end of the day, it saves one child from drowning then this is law that I greatly support.

While I have the opportunity, I acknowledge that today is World MS Day. I would like to greatly support the Kiss Goodbye to MS campaign—a great campaign. My family is touched by MS. I know firsthand the tragedies of this terrible disease on your workability, on your livability and on your family. I am a great ambassador for MS and I would like to acknowledge World MS Day today and wish all of the sufferers of MS a breakthrough in research so that we can beat this terrible disease. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.