



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 24 May 2011

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

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (4.46 pm): I rise to support the Sustainable Planning (Housing Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Bill for a number of reasons. Being a Brisbane born and bred person and someone who has lived in my electorate all my life, I have to say that it is great to be in Mackay. My family and I have holidayed in this region on many occasions. I have had a number of opportunities to come to Mackay. I love this city and it is fantastic to be here once again. There are a couple of things that I have noticed in Brisbane city when it comes to—

Mr Lucas interjected.

Ms GRACE: There are plenty of Italians up here as well. I say 'buongiorno' to all of my Italian colleagues. It is great to be here. At lunch time the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and I met with a multicultural group. It was fantastic to be a part of that community as well.

I have noticed a couple of things about the affordability of housing in Brisbane. One is that the infrastructure costs continue to go up and up and up. It can be distressing for people when they see what they have to pay in Brisbane City Council charges if they are wanting to build a home, town houses or whatever it is. Affordability is another big issue. At the moment the market has flattened out a little, but in the past we have seen some of the biggest rises in housing prices. That was great for those who were in the market and had a house, but it was not very good for those who were wanting to buy their first home. Anything that we can do to stem the tide of increasing fees, which increases the price of houses, and anything that we can do to make housing more affordable is a step in the right direction for the community.

As an example, while I was at lunch I went onto the Brisbane City Council website and looked at some of the fees that the council is charging at the moment which, as I have mentioned, have continued to go up. This is on the site. You can go on there right now and see this. Say a house is replaced by five town houses. The website outlines the fees that have to be paid. There is a DA phase, which is about \$9,000. You have to pay that fee. There is an operational work and compliance assessment fee, which is close to \$3,000. There is an appliance and inspection fee, which is \$8,720 to be precise. If you fail an inspection, you pay an extra \$315 every time. That increases the fee there. Then there is a plan sealing fee, which is another \$22,275. So in order for a developer to do something that is great for the community where one house is removed and it is replaced by the building of five town houses they are looking at fees in the vicinity of \$45,000.

A government member interjected.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection about CityCycle in Brisbane. It actually costs less to buy a bike than to rent one for over 10 hours. A person is better off going out, buying a bike, riding it around Brisbane and then giving it to the nearest kid and saying, 'Here, ride the bike.' That is cheaper than renting a bike for 10 hours. They are the kinds of fees that people are looking at. Inevitably, that adds to the price of a town house or a house. There is no doubt about it. So we should do anything we can. I think it is a courageous step by the government to say, 'Enough is enough. We have left it for too long in the hands of the local

governments around the state.' In this particular area we are saying, 'You can't charge any more than these fees.' I think that is a reasonable thing to do. I am supporting that part of the legislation.

What I really want to speak about, which has not been mentioned a lot, is a progress report on the pool safety laws that is also included in this legislation. The government is continuing to implement the most important swimming pool safety reform since the introduction of mandatory pool barrier standards in 1991. That was nearly 20 years ago. It has now been six months since the new laws commenced, and I am pleased to report to the House that there has been excellent progress in implementing the new laws. Over 880 licensed pool safety inspectors have inspected and certified as compliant the barriers of nearly 15,000 pools. Over 230,000 pools have been placed on the state pool safety register.

The new swimming pool laws have been in place since December 2010. They have replaced a confusing set of 11 different standards with one single standard. So people do not need to go to 11 different areas; they now go to one. This standard now applies to a wider range of buildings such as town houses, unit complexes, hotels, motels, backpacker hostels, caravan parks, transportable home parks and caretaker residences. I have the majority of those types of dwellings within my electorate of Brisbane Central. There is also a high number of swimming pools in my area.

The new laws oblige all pool owners to ensure their pool is compliant with the new uniform standard. Pool owners have until November 2015 to upgrade their pool fence unless they sell or lease their property prior to this date. As I said, nearly 15,000 pools in Queensland have received certification to demonstrate that they comply with Australia's most stringent safety standards. Each new pool that meets the new safety standard means the likelihood of a child drowning is substantially reduced.

I might add that I am actually one of those children who nearly drowned when I was young. It was in a swimming pool. I was saved by a young Italian boy who actually jumped into the pool and took me over to the side. I have not seen Lenny Taliani for many years, but it was Lenny Taliani who saved my life.

Mr Lucas: Good on you, Lenny. Hear, hear, Lenny. You should have married him!

Ms GRACE: Maybe there are some on this side who are happy to hear about that and maybe those on the other side are not too happy to hear about that! It did happen to me. So I think anything we can do that will save a child's life is definitely a step in the right direction.

The pool safety register has now been established to provide government with the state's first set of comprehensive statistics on the number of swimming pools in Queensland. Previously we really did not know how many there were. Already 230,000 pools have been registered. I believe that this register is very important as it will ultimately allow the government to monitor and regulate pools across the state.

The new inspectors are required to certify that swimming pools attached to properties in the process of being sold or leased comply with the new standards. The location and contact details of all inspectors can be accessed through the pool safety register. All inspectors have undertaken a rigorous course and government examination to ensure they understand the requirements of the new legislation and can comply with the standards accurately. In addition, the Pool Safety Council is charged with monitoring the activities of the pool safety inspectors. The council includes water safety, community safety, pool safety and local and state government representatives. Pool Safety Council staff have commenced audits and investigations to ensure the new laws are applied in an appropriate manner.

The government also has now implemented the immersion incident reporting scheme. This scheme was a critical piece of the new laws to allow us to collate, analyse and assess immersion incident information to be used in future safety initiatives. The success of this scheme is evidenced in the 56 immersion incidents which have occurred and which have now been reported on. Never before has the Queensland government been able to access such important statistics relating to child safety in swimming pools.