



Speech by

Ian Walker

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (10.15 pm): I have waited a long time for this evening. It is a great honour to be standing here and to be supporting the Deputy Premier's legislation to amend the Sustainable Planning Act. When I say that I have been waiting a long time, I have not just been waiting the six, seven or eight months that we have been discussing this legislation with the various stakeholders involved in the extensive discussions. I have been waiting 30 years during my time as a practitioner in this area. I have been waiting for the night when a government would introduce legislation which finally got to the nub of getting rid of the excess planning legislation that this state has had to bear over that time.

I can give a good illustration of this. Some years ago I was the guest speaker at the Planning Institute's conference at Longreach. They asked me to speak on planning legislation and they said, 'We actually want you to speak about the weight of this planning legislation, the way it is weighing down on the profession.' I thought, 'Well, that's a good idea. I will weigh this legislation,' and I did. I went off and weighed it. I cannot remember the exact weight now, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I can tell you this: when I first started studying planning law 30 years ago, you could weigh the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act provisions that related to planning in grams. After that, there was the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act, the Integrated Planning Act and now the Sustainable Planning Act, which you weigh in kilograms, not grams. And that does not count the Environmental Protection Act, the Heritage Act and all of the other bits of satellite legislation which have just grown and grown and grown. Somebody had to stand up and do something about it.

The Deputy Premier, I am very glad to say, has done just that this evening, and I am sure Queenslanders will be glad about that and not just the developers that the opposition have been talking about—the big end of town—because guess what? If the big end of town does something, the whole community does something and that means something to the carpenters and to the bricklayers and to the concrete layers who are also involved in providing those services to the community. The Premier and his government have been clear that this pillar, the property and construction pillar, is one that this government will support and will ensure succeeds at long last in this state. It needs assistance at the moment, and this government will give it that assistance.

This legislation is part of a suite of reforms that the Deputy Premier has introduced in this area of planning reform. Let's quickly go through them. There is Planning for Prosperity, the temporary state planning policy which ensures that local governments and government departments, when they are formulating town plans, when they are making planning decisions, ensure that the economic prosperity and progress of their community is a necessary outcome of the planning process. We need that. Up until now all of those state planning policies have got the word 'not' in them—things that we won't do. Planning for Prosperity tells us what we will do—we will provide economic advancement and development through our communities, and so we should.

We have lowered the number of referral triggers, as has been mentioned earlier in the debate, to ensure that fewer applications, some 1,500 fewer applications, now come to the state than would have

under the previous regime, and that frees up the process. The Deputy Premier is in the process of getting to one single state planning policy rather than the multitude of policies we have at the moment. That is up on the website at the moment for early comment. That is just part of the suite of reforms that the Deputy Premier has in train, and they are all great things for the property and construction industry and the community here in Queensland.

Let us go through what the Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill does. It ensures that at each stage of the process those hurdles and risks are removed from our development process. So at the application stage we have ensured that the tricky things about making an application that complies with the requirements are able to be met by council saying, 'We are happy with the form of this application. It complies.' If they do that they will no longer be at risk throughout the process, as they are under the present regime. It unhooks the need in relation to a state planning resource entitlement. It unhooks that; people do not have to get that first—go through that long process—before even starting the planning process. If they want to they can do those two things in tandem or in whichever order they want. It unhooks the unnecessary linking of getting the state resource allocation first and then getting the planning application.

In relation to the single state planning concurrence agency, that is a great leap forward. That has also been mentioned a number of times in debate tonight. The fact that you can come to one place and get one consolidated state response is perhaps the single biggest reform that this legislation brings to Queensland. It is one that those who were involved in our consultations were crying out for. It is a great thing that we have been able to achieve that. It introduces a rigour in the planning court in relation to costs that is an important part of that process, and much has been spoken about that tonight. I particularly commend the Attorney-General who, in his inimitable way, clearly emphasised how the new provisions will ensure that costs are fairly awarded in the Planning and Environment Court.

I do want to say one other thing, because it has been missed a bit in the debate tonight. The Labor Party has had the hide to say that these amendments are anti the little person, the person who wants to take on the big guy. I will tell honourable members what this legislation does. This LNP legislation does something that Labor Party legislation has never done before. They added kilograms of paper to the legislation and they could not find it in themselves during that time to ensure that the court could, as we are now doing, delegate the decision making to a mediator. That mediator can now decide a case in a no-cost jurisdiction, in a no-frills jurisdiction, so that mum and dad who have a concern about their deck and its height or the closeness of the garage that the next-door neighbour has built to the fence do not have to go through a high-level, high-cost judge-oriented procedure. They can go through the process of having a mediator decide that with no frills and no cost. All of the kilograms that they added to the legislation could not achieve that. That is one thing we have achieved tonight for the little person and I am glad that we have been able to do it.

I think that we should be aware that this is only the start of the reform process. The Deputy Premier has much more in mind. One thing in particular that I would like to bring to the House's attention is that in our election campaign we promised to have an annual planning forum, and we intend to have that forum in February next year. Planning is well underway for that. It will occur here in Brisbane. It will give people a chance to look in greater detail and greater depth at how we can reform our planning system. This is only the start. It deals with those issues that are crying out for attention, but there is a lot more to be done. The Deputy Premier has a lot more in mind. I encourage honourable members and members of their communities to keep an eye on our website, to note that that forum is coming up and to participate in it when the time comes. We have much bigger plans to ensure that the kilograms of legislation that have been imposed upon us by the previous government are well and truly slimmed down under this Newman led government.