




Speech by

Hon. Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Thursday, 1 November 2012

SURAT BASIN RAIL (INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT) BILL

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (8.35 pm), in reply: I thank the members of this House who have contributed to the consideration of this bill. I particularly thank the members of the committee. I recognise the contribution that was made by the member for Mirani as chairman of that committee. I thank the member for Burleigh, the member for Keppel, the member for Pine Rivers and the member for Chatsworth for the contributions that they have made in the consideration of the bill before the House tonight.

I also thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the opposition's support for the bill. I will not address some of the unfortunate politically oriented comments that he made. It is unfortunate that he chose to make those comments when addressing the bill, because they could only be described as cheap shots. But I thank him for the support that the opposition is giving to the bill.

I think the record of the previous government in respect of issues that relate to landholders' rights and the impact on landholders of infrastructure projects, and resource extraction projects in this particular area, says more than I can ever say in the summation of this debate. In fact, members who have been here for any period of time will know that I have spoken at length about the poor record that the former government had and the extent to which its inability to manage these issues led to the quite unfortunate community disaffection that we saw in relation to the resources industry generally but the coal seam gas industry in particular. Government has a responsibility to manage these issues—to understand the issues, to listen to the community, to listen to the stakeholders who are most affected and to ensure that the legislation that we pass into law in this House both reflects and takes into account the issues that have been raised. The previous government did not do that, but that is what I think we are doing here tonight.

The job that we are doing here tonight has been made better by the committee system—by the members who worked on that committee, who did the hard work, who examined the bill in detail, who listened to the submissions that were made by stakeholders and who made recommendations based on those submissions. As I said earlier, and as a number of members have also remarked tonight, it is pleasing to see the committee system produce better legislation than would otherwise have been produced in this parliament. That is what the committee system was designed to do. The committee that was headed by the member for Mirani and the other members who were part of that committee and who have contributed to the debate tonight can be justifiably proud that they have set a benchmark. They have set an example which I hope we will see repeated many times in this parliament. We will see more examples of where legislation is amended to take account of the community input.

Those of us who have been here for a long time could remember instances where the committee process would have produced better legislation. When we were considering the committee structure in this House and how the effect of legislation can never be fully understood unless it is viewed through the eyes of the stakeholders and the community members it affects, there was one classic example that I referred to many times—that is, the vegetation management legislation.

If the vegetation management legislation had been subject to the same type of scrutiny from a committee that this Surat Basin Rail bill was subject to, had there been an opportunity for the stakeholders who were affected by that legislation—and who remain affected by that legislation to this very day, the landholders whose rights were so profoundly affected, whose capital values were so profoundly affected—to say to the legislators, ‘This will be the effect on me. This will be the effect on my circumstances,’ in the same way that the stakeholders in this particular legislation have had, then that legislation would have been better than it is today and it would not have caused the enormous degree of community disaffection, the enormous degree of angst, the enormous degree of lingering anger that continues in rural and regional Queensland.

That is but one example that I point to because it is probably the worst example of legislation. It was the worst piece of legislation that I have seen go through this House—bar none. It was a piece of legislation that was implemented by people who did not understand the effect that it had on the community, on the stakeholders, on the individuals, on the businesses, on the communities that were affected by it.

That history very much guided those of us who were part of the process that put in place the committee system that has produced results here tonight. That is very gratifying and I think it is a great legacy for people such as Mike Horan, Robbie Schwarten and Judy Spence. People worked together, in what was probably one of the very rare cases of bipartisanship that I have ever seen in this place, to put in place a committee system that allowed this sort of input from people who are affected by the legislation. I hope that we do see a lot more of those types of results here.

I encourage all of the members on the committees to provide to stakeholders, individuals and anyone with an input into legislation an opportunity to have their say in that regard. I would, however, repeat the comments that I made earlier today in this place that the committee system was never designed to treat every piece of legislation in the same way. There are pieces of legislation that have an effect on people in the community that deserve much more fulsome consideration by the committee system than others do. There are pieces of process legislation that do not need to spend a long time before a committee. There are pieces of urgent legislation and pieces of legislation that enact what is clearly the government’s agenda that do not need to go to a committee at all. We need to be able to learn to differentiate between those types of legislation.

The piece of legislation that we consider tonight is clearly one that needed to be considered carefully by the committee. It is clearly a piece of legislation where opportunities needed to be afforded to people to put forward their submissions about how this legislation and the proposal that it addresses affect them and their businesses. It is only when you hear those stories, it is only when you sit and talk to those people, it is only when you read those submissions and understand their situation that you understand how the legislation may be made fairer and more just. I think this parliament has been through a good process tonight. I congratulate the member for Mirani as chairman of that committee and the other members of the committee. I commend the bill to the House.