



Speech by
Jon Krause

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard Tuesday, 31 July 2012

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREENTAPE REDUCTION) AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Mr KRAUSE (Beaudesert—LNP) (12.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Firstly, I commend the minister for the timely manner in which the bill was brought to the House, underscoring the importance of the reforms contained in the bill to the Queensland economy and the regulatory framework for environmental protection. Secondly, I would like to note the constructive and collegiate manner in which all members of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee—government and non-government members—undertook their task of reviewing this bill, hearing public submissions and making inquiries of and seeking clarification from the minister. In particular, I thank the chairman, the member for Lockyer, and the member for Gympie for their contributions. The member for South Brisbane even contributed positively to the committee's deliberations. If only the member for South Brisbane would bring her constructive attitude in the committee to this House. If by some measure of a miracle we were to see that—and see that from members opposite generally—we might finally see the members opposite show some contrition for the mess in which they left this great state of Queensland.

Mr Berry: And apologise.

Mr KRAUSE: We can only hope. When I listen to the speeches of the members opposite in relation to this bill, it is a bit strange to marry their comments in this House with some other comments they have made in the media. It is like they cannot make up their minds whether they support the bill or not. In particular, when the member for South Brisbane spoke to this bill she claimed it very adamantly as a Labor bill and very much wanted to take the credit for all the reforms being made to the EPA by this bill.

Mr Johnson: It will be interesting to see how she votes.

Mr KRAUSE: It will be interesting to see how she votes. I take that interjection from the member for Gregory. But I see in the paper today comments by the member for South Brisbane about the process by which this bill has come to this place, in particular the consultation process that has led to this bill being brought in here. I note that there was consultation on the bill, in its former form, by the previous parliament. That consultation was included in the activities of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee in this parliament. The member for South Brisbane is quoted in the paper as saying the following—

It's legitimate to ask if they are fair dinkum about consultation.

I have had cause to bring up this matter in previous speeches in relation to bills, but I ask the House: how can members opposite question whether we are fair dinkum about consultation when we look at their record of consultation on things like the asset sales? Was the previous government fair dinkum about consultation in relation to asset sales and the split of QR National?

Mr Berry: Two weeks.

Mr KRAUSE: Two weeks. Was the previous government fair dinkum in consulting with community and business on the introduction of the waste levy? Was the previous government fair dinkum when it introduced exploration permits for coal seam gas over the entire Scenic Rim without any consultation with

any of the landholders in that community? It is duplicitous in the extreme for the member for South Brisbane to get up in this House and claim this bill as a Labor bill and then go to the media and bag the process by which it has come to this House. The member for South Brisbane cannot make up her mind whether she supports the bill or not. I ask the members of this House, including the members opposite: would the real Jackie Trad please stand up?

I am quite pleased to see that a number of submissions made by the committee have been adopted by the minister and will be presented to the House further into this process as amendments to the bill. The efficiency in bringing the legislation to the House and the positive contribution of the committee demonstrates a commitment by this government to take the required steps to ensure Queensland's economy fires again. This can be so easily contrasted with the actions of the former government that shamefully allowed the former version of this bill, introduced in the last parliament, to lapse when the election was called. It preferred instead to ram through this parliament the Civil Partnerships Act in a desperate act to try to save the former Treasurer, the former member for Mount Coot-tha, from electoral oblivion. It did not work.

Mr Powell: And the member for Ashgrove.

Mr KRAUSE: The former member for Ashgrove as well. I take the interjection from the minister. Labor never let good policy get in the way of politicking and it is still doing it now in opposition. Those opposite will do and say whatever they need to to stay in office. By shelving the former version of this bill they show to Queensland business their true colours. The passing of this version of the bill, which will ease the burden of regulation on business, will, to coin a phrase from another era, unchain the heart of business. It will do away with the unnecessary slow and duplicative environmental regulation. Instead of governing for Queensland and its economy, Labor preferred to pass another tax in the form of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act, a result of which was to impose yet another tax on thousands of businesses that simply could not afford it and to raise the cost of living even further for everyday Queenslanders.

As we have heard here in this place in previous sittings, members opposite are still clinging to waste, taxes and the absolute hypocrisy with which they conducted themselves in government. They defended a waste tax in this place just a few weeks ago which was thoroughly rejected by Queenslanders. It seems they are cuddling up to the Greens at the very time the rest of the ALP is trying to distance itself from the Greens. It is nonetheless encouraging to see them clinging to the wreckage of the Bligh Labor government which took them to the depths in which they find themselves now—seven seats—a Tarago.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr BERRY: I rise to a point of order. I know that the member for South Brisbane has adopted the seat of the Leader of the Opposition, but if she is going to interject she has to go back to her own chair.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): As shadow minister she has carriage of the bill for the opposition.

Mr KRAUSE: I congratulate the minister on taking immediate decisive action through regulation to abolish the waste levy and I am pleased to be able to speak in favour of this bill here today. Let me consider briefly some of the features of this bill, which was left to the LNP to bring to this place, that will ultimately benefit all Queenslanders. The bill and the green tape reduction project will produce estimated savings of \$12.5 million per year, contributing to the government's policy to reduce regulation and red tape by 20 per cent. That is something that businesses in my electorate, and businesses all across Queensland, will welcome with open arms. In particular it will introduce a process for standard applications with standard conditions for specified operations which meet set criteria. It is estimated that following implementation around half of all environmental applications will be able to go through this standard process. It will save each applicant on average \$20,000 in preparation costs, 150 pages in avoided application materials and 68 days in processing time which is a reduction of approximately 62,000 pages of application documents per year. This does not just save business time, it also saves officers in the department time which results in greater efficiencies all round for business in this state. In particular I know that businesses in my electorate, such as AJ Bush, Gelita, the Enright sawmill and various agricultural operations will welcome the simplification and streamlining of environmental application processes. There are examples of environmentally relevant activities that a standard application may apply to, including wooden product manufacturing, screening and waste transfer stations. Might I add to that list and say that motor mechanic workshops like Geiger Motors in Canungra should also be a part of this standard application process. The business of a motor mechanic shop is not new to society and there should be standard conditions that apply to these businesses when they are sold or moved into other ownership so the process of selling businesses is made more simple. Such businesses should not be subject to vigorous site-specific applications.

There are other initiatives contemplated in this bill which will also be of benefit to business in my electorate and all over the state, including looking into a proposal to remove the need for small businesses to obtain environmental authorities. Motor vehicle workshops are one of those areas where that is

proposed. This is the crux of where we are going with this bill. This bill does not pretend to be a complete reform of the Environmental Protection Act, although I think there is some merit in looking at doing that some time in the future, but the department should have a goal of constantly assessing whether regulation is necessary and perhaps look at a system where there can be conditional exemptions given to some operations subject to regular ongoing compliance over time so that the department and the regulatory authorities adopt a more passive role in implementing and policing the provisions in the act.

Might I also make reference to the streamlining of information requirements. The bill provides a clear list of information that needs to be in an application for an environmental authority. This will reduce the number of matters that need to be considered by an officer to make a decision to approve an authority and, not only that, it will stop the back and forth of information requests between officers and businesses making environmental applications. This is obviously going to save time, money and get projects and businesses into operation in a more timely manner.

There has been consultation carried out on this bill, both in 2011 under the former version of the bill and this year. Peak industry associations have reaffirmed their support and the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee received feedback from a number of those stakeholders. The bill is a start on the road to a reform of the Environmental Protection Act and the environmental protection regime in this state. Might I also add that whilst it is not contained in this bill, members in rural and regional areas will also be looking in the future for some review of vegetation management regulations as they apply to the removal of regrowth in rural areas and some relief from the vigorous monitoring and enforcement which has been to date carried out by the Department of Environment and Resource Management. Where areas have been cleared they are subject to regrowth and that regrowth then needs to be cleared. But I digress. I commend the bill to the House and thank the minister for bringing it to the House so promptly.