




Speech by

Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard Wednesday, 28 November 2012

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (8.46 pm): We have just seen a real case of head-in-the-sand disease. There is no doubt in my mind that the member for South Brisbane is purely pandering to her green tree mates, which is what led the last government into the actions that put this state in such a desperate financial position. It did not look at the economic benefit of any particular issue to the state; it just pandered to wild green attitudes.

This bill is part of a suite of changes designed to get Queensland back on track and working again. This bill will help untangle and dismantle unnecessary Labor red tape, improve government efficiency and help the government to make better and more timely decisions in matters of high importance. The bill will achieve legislative cohesion. It will streamline the relationship and functions of local government and other organisations so that we will be like rowers all pulling in the same direction. That is something that the Labor Party does not quite understand. In that way, we will achieve a better economic performance and outcome for all Queenslanders.

To extend the rowing analogy further, I could say that this LNP bill will be the 'awesome foursome' of legislation. It is a far cry from the lay-down-Sally attitude of the previous Labor government administration, where inefficient red tape held back the Queensland economy. Firstly, this bill will deliver efficiency by integrating and improving the key provisions of the Industrial Development Act 1963 and the Urban Development Authority Act 2007. Under the new Economic Development Act 2012, particular developments will be fast-tracked to meet the priorities for economic and community development, delivering benefits to more Queenslanders in a shorter time frame. The Economic Development Act will also set in place clear transparency with the establishment of a Minister for Economic Development Queensland and improved governance arrangements for the act to include a board of up to six members.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Commonwealth Games Infrastructure Authority will streamline government involvement with regard to creating infrastructure for the Commonwealth Games in 2018. That is something very close to my heart because, as we all know, the Commonwealth Games will be held on the Gold Coast in 2018. In short, this new government structure is a better use of resources which allows the government to get better game bang for its buck. It will deliver better planning, development and production of critical Commonwealth Games infrastructure like the games village and other venues. Not only that, but because of the streamlining and collaboration the government will be better placed to create infrastructure which will deliver a lasting economic, social and cultural legacy from which the Gold Coast can leverage well after the athletes have gone home.

There are other components to the bill, including the amendments to the South Bank Corporation Act 1989. In line with finding efficiencies and streamlining the functions of government, the bill amends the South Bank Corporation Act to transition the statutory planning powers of the South Bank Corporation to the Brisbane City Council in accordance with the Newman government's election commitment. This transfer back to the Brisbane City Council empowers Australia's new world city to better meet the needs of the second half of the 21st century.

In addition, the Economic Development Bill also amends the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 to clarify and streamline the powers of the Coordinator-General. Importantly, these amendments will deliver a more robust criteria for deciding which projects should be undertaken by the Coordinator-General and the streamlining of environmental impact processes, to name just two examples.

This bill will also make changes to the title of such things as 'projects of state significance' and 'infrastructure facilities of significance' to prevent those proponents from using these declarations to wrongly indicate that they have some level of state support when those declarations may not be in fact accurate. The bill also recognises the impact of the 2011 floods and takes important and timely steps to implement the recommendations set out in the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.

This bill acknowledges the important work of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority in rebuilding vital community infrastructure. The bill will ensure that the tenure of the authority is extended by lengthening the expiry date of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 to 30 June 2014. The authority will then cease in line with the government's previous commitment.

The bill also amends the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and the Disaster Management Act 2003 to implement specific recommendations of the report of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. These amendments provide the issue of temporary emissions licences to allow for temporary discharges as part of the response to an emergency event. This bill helps the mines mitigate risk through provisions made for emergency releases in times of flood.

The implementation of this bill is timely with Queensland now entering its wettest part of the year and the increased potential for flood events. The amendments to this bill create a fair balance between economic and environmental imperatives by allowing more flexible decision making in times of extreme flood events like those seen in early 2011. Should a flood event like 2011 occur again, this bill will mean \$2 billion could be kept in the Queensland economy through the granting of temporary emissions licences instead of lost production. I stress that the government will take the issuing of these permits extremely seriously. Each application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. In the case of mine water releases, these would be assessed against the mine's ability to meet strict environmental and water-quality standards and demonstrated levels of dilution.

The committee—and I chaired the public meetings—made 20 recommendations. We have already heard from the Deputy Premier tonight that he has accepted the vast majority of those recommendations. I would just like to speak to a couple of those.

We did hear from interested parties, in particular local governments, about having an additional briefing from the department with regard to priority development areas. They were also concerned that the MEDQ could appoint a local government representative, they were concerned who that representative might be and they were concerned whether local councils then had the authority to delegate that responsibility to somebody else within their organisation. Had the member for South Brisbane bothered to read the amendments that the Deputy Premier is proposing to move she would know that those recommendations have been accepted. The Deputy Premier will be moving amendments to that effect.

There was quite a bit of concern raised by proponents that, where they may have already entered into an environmental impact study, the new legislation might prevent them from moving forward with that study because the legislation actually requires that they start the environmental impact statement under the provisions of this legislation. The committee recommended that the minister have a look to see whether it was appropriate if somebody had already proceeded through the majority of an environmental impact study that they be allowed to have that as their starting point under this legislation. I am glad to see that the Deputy Premier has accepted that recommendation and an amendment will be moved in that regard.

The member for South Brisbane raised the issue of advertising under the provisions of the Economic Development Bill 2012 and the fact that the Coordinator-General was not required to advertise anymore. We have already heard from the Leader of Government Business and the Premier on numerous occasions that the government is moving forward with an e-data system. I would suggest to the member for South Brisbane that all of this information will be available on the internet. It will only take someone to have a look at that and keep an eye on that. I am sure they can subscribe to get notification.

We all know that our newspaper circulations are dwindling and that it is no longer appropriate for these sorts of advertisements to be placed in newspapers. I would suggest to the member for South Brisbane that she is living in the past. It is time to come into the future. The future is emails. The future is e-data. That is what this government is proposing.

A government member interjected.

Mr HART: Yes. I am not sure whether they are on the NBN or not, but she can talk to her mates about that.

The member raised the issue of the term 'emerging conditions'. Again, had she bothered to read the amendments that are proposed to be moved by the Deputy Premier—and I think he covered this quite well

in his speech—she would be aware that the government is changing the wording so it reads ‘emergency and applicable event’. I think that fixes all of the issues that the member for South Brisbane raised. It is really only a matter of reading the amendments to get on top of exactly what it is that we are talking about here.

The member for South Brisbane attended our public meeting on 9 November. She quite clearly asked questions that she thought were applicable—very green questions. One of those was directed at the QRC and related to the notice they had of this bill and how long they had had the bill. Then she stood in this place and told us that the QRC were the only people who were in fact notified in advance. I can tell members from firsthand experience that they were the only ones that she asked that question of. That is why she got that answer. The record of the meeting will show that they were the only ones that brought that up because they were the only ones she asked that question of.

I think the member for South Brisbane also raised the implication that this government was looking at individuals and their economic circumstances with regard to our temporary emissions licence proposal. The committee did consider all of this. Broadly speaking, we would like to see the total impact on Queensland taken into account when any of these sorts of things are considered. The Deputy Premier again has considered that and will be moving amendments to make sure that the bill does not refer to any individual but refers to the whole of the state and to any economic impact that that might have on the whole of the state.

I will just raise one last point because I have been talking for quite a while. The member for South Brisbane mentioned the 24-hour period. It was discussed quite heavily in the committee and at our public meetings. We really need to think about what happened in 2011 and the flood event that we had, the amount of water that fell from the sky and the way that changed things. Over a 24-hour period things can change pretty dramatically. I suggest to the member for South Brisbane that it is no good sitting on our hands for 24 hours and just waiting to see what happens. If we do that, we could all end up underwater. Under the previous Labor government, this state very nearly ended up underwater, both financially and in every other fashion.

I thank the members of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee and our staff—Kathy Munro, Bernice, Margaret, Mary and Rhia—for their input, and I thank the people who came along on the 9th and gave us very valuable evidence. I think the committee deliberated over a lot of those things. It is a bit of a shame that the Labor Party did not have a bit more input into our recommendations. Had they been there when we made those recommendations perhaps they might not have put in the dissenting report, which really does not make a great deal of sense.