



Speech by

Michael Pucci

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr PUCCI** (Logan—LNP) (9.26 pm): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, because you know they will not be able to hear me speak! It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak in support of the Queensland Art Gallery Amendment Bill. This bill will empower the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees to take the much needed steps in establishing a committee designed to administer the activities of the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation.

The outcomes of this bill will generate positive results not only for the Queensland Art Gallery but for our state as a whole and its commitment to enriching and promoting the visual artistic displays that are exhibited for our broader community to appreciate. This bill I believe also represents a key element to our government's action plan to get this state back on track by having a clear-cut administrative process free from the bureaucratic entanglement that currently exists.

After extensive consultation with the Queensland Art Gallery, this bill will bring a stable platform from which the committee, under the delegated authority of the board, can exercise fair, accountable and pragmatic governance. With this delegation of authority, the committee can shape and develop procedures that will better serve the day-to-day operations of the Art Gallery.

This bill will seek to clarify the status of the foundation as a charitable body, ensure that the foundation committee members are protected from civil liability when acting on behalf of the board and, finally, clarify the relationship between the board and the foundation. Though protecting committee members from civil liability in the course of their duties as directed by the board, this legislation does not confer immunity from proceedings or prosecutions without adequate justifications, again returning accountability to institutions whilst improving the operational freedom that so many of them deserve.

This bill will also seek to extend the functions of the board and create greater opportunities for the committee and the foundation to develop the gallery's collection. It will also support the foundation committee's function in raising funds in its determination to develop the collection and displays of the gallery. This amendment also provides for equal representation of committee members, encompassing prior and current personnel. This representation will see that the gallery is administrated with a fair and proportionate committee that will undoubtedly serve with utmost professionalism.

As a result of this amendment's greater accountability through checks and balances, committee members will have the regulation needed to create more freedom to make decisions to continue the growth occurring within the gallery. This amendment will also seek to provide a clear-cut and simplistic regulation for the board to deal with both existing and future gifts, donations, bequests and legacies.

I have witnessed firsthand the progressive development of art programs in Queensland, whether that is as a member of parliament or as a father of two young children progressing through our education system. Society at large does not rate art as a front-line issue, and when our state is in such a dire situation other priorities such as paying back the debt, delivering better front-line services and building a four-pillar economy for many take priority. However, I ask members to think back to when they were at school or when their children started kindergarten. One of the core learning tools used as a foundation for learning is art. While we invest both time and money and generate legislation to support tertiary education and

apprenticeships, we must appropriately pay attention to supporting endearing forms of expressions within our community.

In May this year, I had the privilege to join my parliamentary colleagues the member for Chatsworth, Mr Steve Minnikin, and the member for Mansfield, Mr Ian Walker, at the opening of the Gallery of Modern Art, an event hosted by the Minister for Arts, the Hon. Ros Bates, which demonstrates how our government is proactive in promoting and supporting the development of art in our state, and this amendment is a tribute to those efforts. I also had the privilege to attend the opening of the contemporary woman's exhibition in April at the Gallery of Modern Art, once again hosted by the honourable Minister for the Arts. This was a wonderful exhibition that demonstrated the unique and binding connection women artists have with our country in the contemporary art world.

The future of creative visual arts in our education system is critical to developing skills amongst our youth. It also creates an environment in which our youth can constructively express their artistic talents on a canvas and not on a brick wall. Whilst our government is creating programs to encourage art programs within our schools, we must also support what many consider the central stage for such pieces of work. The Queensland Art Gallery is currently hosting the *Portrait of Spain* exhibition—a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Queenslanders to witness artistic masterpieces that would otherwise be out of reach in our corner of the world.

Mr Rickuss: Member for Logan, have you been to see it?

Mr PUCCI: I will take that interjection. I have been to see it. Of course I have been to see it. As I said, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Mrs Menkens: It is magnificent.

Mr PUCCI: It is magnificent. This foundation will continue to provide vital contributions to the cultural growth of our state and ensure that connections to the art community will not be lost on future generations. It is essential in not only the cultural appreciation sense of the term but, more importantly, an educational one. We need to support legislative amendments like this that preserve and foster institutions, encourage the growth of artistic development and ultimately provide the much needed legislative mechanisms for the operation of such a pivotal institution like the Queensland Art Gallery.

In my electorate of Logan I hosted an art competition for my local schools where I invited all the students to provide some art for my office in the parliament and in the electorate. They had a fantastic time. The schools all put together a board. They picked out the No. 1 piece of art and submitted it. They chose the winners, and they are now hanging in our offices.

Mrs Ostapovitch: It is beautiful, too.

Mr PUCCI: Thank you, Freya. I want to thank the Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Ros Bates, for having afternoon tea in parliament and handing out certificates to all the students who participated. I got emails from the schools stating they could not wipe the smiles off the kids' faces they enjoyed it so much. I want to thank Madam Speaker for coming out and saying hello during the private guided tour I gave them. That is why it is imperative to implement appropriate legislative amendments in order to maximise the operational efficiency of the Queensland Art Gallery and allow the board of trustees and foundation committee to have the authority and regulation to achieve real progress in securing the future of art in Queensland.

With new legislative markers supporting the core business operations of the gallery and the establishment of the foundation committee to reduce red tape and increase efficiency, the economic and, most of all, educational benefits will enrich the lives of Queenslanders for decades to come. This amendment once again will allow the board and foundation to take proactive steps under strict legislative guidelines by which a direct by-product will be the international recognition of the Queensland Art Gallery—a booster to the local economy and the exposure of world-class artwork to every demographic that makes our great state.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Professor Susan Street on her appointment as the chair of the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees. With Professor Street's strong depth of experience and strong supportive legislation, the Queensland Art Gallery will without a doubt to continue to grow as an asset for all Queenslanders.

I want to congratulate the minister on the work she has done on this bill, thank the chair for her leadership on the committee, and thank all the members who participated in the committee and its staff for their work in bringing this bill to the House. It gives me great pleasure to commend this bill to the House.