



Speech by


**Peter Wellington**

**MEMBER FOR NICKLIN**

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

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (2.34 pm): It is great to be able to rise to participate in this debate on the Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill following the member for Thuringowa. It is also great that we have an Independent deputy speaker in the chair. I do not intend to repeat all the matters that have been raised by other members who have spoken on this bill. Suffice to say that it makes a lot of sense. As the member for Thuringowa and other members have recognised, work started on this plan to cut red tape in 2010. That was acknowledged by the minister in his second reading speech. I note that the overriding principle is to try to bring licensing into proportion with the risk involved. When I was reading the material, I noted that the bill consists of 283 pages, the explanatory notes go to 196 pages and there are amendments to be moved by the opposition which I am interested to pursue during the committee stages.

When I was reading the material in relation to the overriding principle that licensing is to be proportionate to the risk, I reflected on a matter that has been front and centre in my electorate over the past few years, which was a Powerlink proposal to build a new transmission line through an area where there was no transmission line. The real issue was the different opinions about what was the risk. Certainly, various parties believed that the powerline would cause no risk to the community, yet my constituents had a different view on that issue. I note that the bill is trying to cut red tape for small business, but I do have a bit of a quandary about the definition of 'risk' when there is a difference of opinion between bureaucrats and the community as to how to interpret that concept.

I note that a number of ministers are in the chamber at the moment whilst we are talking about the issue of cutting red tape and trying to better clarify the status of the law. Recently I wrote to the Minister for Environment, the minister responsible for primary industries and the Minister for Transport on a similar matter. A whole range of state departments are involved in the Maroochy River and issues around the management of fish habitat, transport issues, river safety, boating safety, fishing, bank erosion, water skiing and so on. There are many issues involved. Property owners whose land adjoins this area of the Maroochy River are trying to get some resolution, to ensure that they can protect their property and stop the continual erosion of the riverbanks.

I note the proposed cutbacks in staffing for the various departments. Recently the Sunshine Coast Regional Council was approached and asked to take the lead in trying to resolve this. The council was of the view that it was not able to take on the additional duties that the state government officers were asking it to take on, because the council is also facing significant staffing pressures. Although I know that is not directly on point, I raise it here to see if we can get all the ministers and the departments together, as we did a few years ago, to see if one department will take the lead agency role to resolve all the issues of conflict between the fish habitat, boating and recreational and commercial fishermen. The council, too, is very keen to be involved. If we cannot come forward with a sensible resolution so that landowners can do the work they want to do on the riverbanks to prevent continual erosion, frankly, they will say that this government is as bad as the last because no-one has shown any real leadership. Perhaps the ministers

will find the time to respond to the issues about which I have written to them. Maybe some department officers can sit around a table with council officers, representatives of the community and myself to try to resolve those conflicting issues. When previous state government officers wanted the council to be the prosecution arm, council said, 'No way. If you want to prosecute landowners for doing what you believe is the wrong thing, you become the prosecutors.' Fortunately nothing happened, but certainly we need to see this issue resolved as soon as possible.

On another issue in relation to cutting red tape—and I note that the Minister for Local Government is here—recently I had a meeting with a business which has been building garages and carports for many, many years and they shared with me their experiences that they have had with all of the local councils and their differences in regulations and the cost of compliance. They said, 'It is the same carport. It is the same garage. Yet look at the difference between what is required by the various councils and the hoops we have to jump through and the costs.' In some instances the cost of compliance was greater than the cost of building the carport! And councils wonder why so many constituents in South-East Queensland just throw their hands in the air and say, 'Sorry, I'm going to build it and forget about council compliance.' Something is drastically wrong when the cost of compliance outweighs in some instances the cost of building a simple carport.

I say to the Minister for Local Government that I commend this government's attempt to reduce red tape. I hope the government can take it further and lead the way, especially with councils. I know the government says, 'We want to empower councils to take the lead and do their own thing and we are not going to stand on their toes.' But my view is that, if our councils are not going to cut red tape and businesses that deal across all of these councils can show the very clear inconsistencies between councils and the ridiculous fees and charges, then surely there is a case for the state government to say at the next Local Government Association meeting that maybe the state government needs to take the lead to show that we also want councils to cut red tape to make it easier for small business to operate in our great state of Queensland.

I have read the amendments that the opposition has foreshadowed. I think they make a lot of sense, so I will be very interested to hear what the minister's response is to those amendments. I commend the bill to the House and look forward to the minister's response to the matters that have been raised in this debate.