




Speech by
Sean Choat

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

Hansard Wednesday, 12 September 2012

QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr CHOAT** (Ipswich West—LNP) (9.35 pm): I rise to speak briefly to the Queensland Art Gallery Amendment Bill 2012. It is a pleasure to speak to this bill as I am mindful of the growth in participation and appreciation for the arts in my electorate of Ipswich West. It is definitely no secret that I am proud of my electorate and will talk it up at every opportunity—a trait I share with the mayor of Ipswich, Councillor Paul Pisasale. Indeed, the changes to the City of Ipswich and the Somerset region include a significant increase in awareness of the arts and our great local artists. The galleries and other public spaces within the region are home to some very fine examples of art and culture.

I could not get up and speak to any part of this portfolio without giving a plug to the Workshops Rail Museum in North Ipswich. What a great place it is. It certainly has become a centre of culture for my electorate, particularly the Ipswich parts. I would say to all honourable members, not only those who have young children, to come along. It is a great place. I recently had the pleasure of representing our most excellent Minister for the Arts, Ros Bates, at an opening of an exhibition called *I've been Working on the Railway*. Most honourable members would know that I absolutely love the railway. It was great to represent the minister and mix with some good old railway people, and I had a blast. That exhibition was really interesting and it is relevant to some of the things we have spoken about in this House today.

Mr Bleijie: Thomas the Tank Engine?

Mr CHOAT: No, it was not Thomas, but Thomas is there quite regularly. It was not Bob the Builder, either. It was about the role that our Indigenous people and South Sea Islanders have played in building the heritage and culture of the railway we have left in Queensland today. It was great, and I have been back.

A government member interjected.

Mr CHOAT: 'Rachel the rail wrecker' was in the chair when it was sold. I will take that interjection.

Recently I was presented with pieces of art created by local artists for display in my community office. Mr Ian Foster of Lowood has painted for me a beautiful painting of a pair of rainbow lorikeets, and I have the most striking piece of Aboriginal art by artist Maxine Bennetts, who is affectionately known as 'Macca'. Honourable members know that I have a history in ornithology, to put it correctly. This contemporary piece of art is called *Pigeon Patterns* and depicts the movement of the pigeon in flight, represented in traditional Aboriginal style. It takes pride of place in my office, and I look forward to showing this to the honourable minister when she next visits my electorate of Ipswich West.

Aboriginal art holds a significant place in Queensland's arts culture, and I know this bill will provide for the continued status of Aboriginal and other contemporary art styles in the state. The bill is important to the Queensland arts sector and to our culture as it will shape our approach to the arts in many respects. Under the bill, committee members will be sought with skills and experience in finance, business and philanthropy who are well-respected members of the community and who are able to advocate for the gallery and use their community networks to encourage philanthropy and wider support.

The board of the gallery will be responsible for appointments to the foundation committee, with at least two committee members drawn from the board. Nominees for appointment are currently being considered by the board. The board will retain the power to terminate any appointments under section 25 of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954. The Queensland Art Gallery Act 1987 provides that a person is not able to be appointed to the board if that person is not eligible to manage a corporation or if the person is convicted of certain offences. Accordingly, formal checks of board members who are nominated as foundation committee members will be undertaken for criminal history, bankruptcy and eligibility to manage corporations along with scrutiny of the usual personal particulars statement and a search of the Lobbyist Register. While there are no legislative requirements to undertake criminal history checks for eligibility for appointment of non-board members to the foundation committee, they are required to complete a personal particulars statement and to disclose details of any conflicts of interests and criminal history. These processes give certainty that only fit and proper persons will be appointed.

Currently, foundation council members are not remunerated for their work on the council and it is not proposed to seek remuneration for foundation committee members at this time. I think they will get reward enough for their participation so they do not need any remuneration as such. Under the proposed arrangements, the policy 'Remuneration of Part-time Chairs and Members of Government Boards, Committees and Statutory Authorities' will apply, so fees may in future be paid to committee members in accordance with these guidelines. I am sure the opportunities to contribute to the arts through committee membership are rewarding enough and that members will be more concerned with the future of the arts in our great state.

Under the bill, foundation committee members are obligated to disclose if they have a direct or indirect interest in a matter being considered by the committee. Committee members with a material personal interest in a matter being considered by the foundation committee must not vote on the matter or otherwise take part in any decision of the committee in relation to the matter. This bill provides for the protection of the integrity of the board and the foundation committee who will in turn provide for the future of the arts through their work. I am certain that we will see great things for the arts in Queensland through this legislation and the great work of Minister Bates's department. I commend the bill to the House.