



Speech by

Seath Holswich

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREENTAPE REDUCTION) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOLSWICH (Pine Rivers—LNP) (5.34 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill is an important bill for businesses in Pine Rivers, particularly small and medium businesses, as it will ultimately start to reduce the administrative burden of government legislation and green and red tape on these businesses—a burden that has been steadily growing in recent years under the previous Labor government. If there is one complaint I hear from Pine Rivers businesses almost more than any other it is that governments seem to make a sport out of inventing new administrative processes for businesses to follow. Too many owners of small and medium sized businesses that I talk to spend an exorbitant amount of time and money completing paperwork and meeting ever-expanding government requirements. So instead of getting on with running their business, making a profit and employing more staff, they find themselves sidetracked in an administrative nightmare. It has been estimated that the changes proposed in this bill will save each standard applicant an average of \$20,000 in application preparation costs, 150 pages worth of application and will save an average of 68 days in processing time. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that this can only be good for businesses.

There are also other benefits to businesses in this bill. By introducing the single licence type of the environmental authority, it offers a degree of flexibility that will allow a business a more simplified process to alter an approval as their business grows. Businesses in Pine Rivers again regularly talk to me about the hassles that government administration causes when their business starts to grow. Whether it be payroll tax, green tape or charges related to developing new infrastructure, it becomes a sad state of affairs when a business would rather stay at the size they are now because it is too much stress for them to try to grow. Ultimately this attitude that business owners feel themselves forced into impedes the creation of new employment opportunities in a business that might otherwise be able to grow to whole new levels.

As well as the obvious benefits for business, I think it is vitally important to note that these changes will not reduce environmental standards. These improvements to the administrative processes are just that—administrative improvements—and they will not impact the outcomes that are required by the Environmental Protection Act 1994. I note also that all current penalties for noncompliance are retained, as well as there being new measures introduced to ensure compliance. The changes proposed in this bill will free up department staff from having to spend as much time assessing low-risk activities and give greater scope for department staff to put more of a focus into the high-risk activities. It is quite foreseeable that a consequence of this is that we will actually end up with better assessment of high-risk activities, leading to higher environmental outcomes, whilst at the same time reducing administrative green-tape burdens on businesses, department staff and local government.

In speaking of local government, it is pleasing to see that this bill will also streamline the administrative processes for local governments, as well as providing long-term savings for local governments in a number of ways. As I mentioned before, it will reduce the administration required for low-risk activities; it will provide reductions in the assessment processes for development applications; it will

reduce unnecessary planning referrals to local governments; it will remove the need for registration certificates; and it will streamline the maintenance of approval documents. The downside to this is that there are some short-term implementation costs foreshadowed. However, I think any local government will be accepting of this in order to realise those long-term benefits, and of course these are not just benefits for councils but flow on to local businesses as well.

I also want to make just a quick comment on the impact this bill will have on the mining and petroleum approval processes. Whilst this really will not directly impact the Pine Rivers electorate, it is an important step towards strengthening the resources pillar of our economy. The fact that an estimated 2,400 small mining operators will no longer need to complete a 15-page administrative requirement as part of an approvals process will no doubt allow the approvals process to be completed in a more timely manner, something the previous government struggled to get a handle on at any stage.

It was interesting to hear the contribution from the member for South Brisbane tonight claiming credit for this bill. I seem to have heard the point that it was only really the election that got in the way of this bill being passed under the previous Labor government. The facts of the matter are it had 14 years in government to implement legislation such as this, but did it? No, it did not! I have to say that the election did not just sneak up on it. It knew when it was due. It saw the date on the calendar, or maybe its skills in reading a calendar are comparable with its skills in balancing a budget! The facts are Labor did not implement this legislation. It could not deliver. In just over three months the Newman government is delivering.

This Labor opposition seems to have a selective memory. They are keen to claim credit for a bill like this that they did not actually get into legislation. 'It's ours, it's ours; get your hands off it', is the cry that we hear from them. Maybe the opposition do not get enough credit for the things that they did deliver for this state. Let us give them credit for what they did deliver. These are some of their achievements that we do not hear much from them about so I am pleased to mention them tonight and give them a bit of a run: they delivered the Health payroll system; they delivered 31,000 people on public housing waiting lists—congratulations!; they delivered 90,000 pages of red tape.

Mr Crisafulli: Tick!

Mr HOLSWICH: Tick, exactly. They delivered on that one.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr HOLSWICH: They did not deliver as a government, they are not delivering as an opposition. Forget about any sort of delusions of grandeur, I think the Labor opposition are having delusions of adequacy. That is what they are suffering from.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr PITT: I rise again on a matter of relevance under standing order 139. This is a restricted title for particular purposes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Manager of Opposition Business, please resume your seat. There is no point of order on relevance.

Mr DRISCOLL: I rise to a point of order. I want to point out that the member for South Brisbane is continually interjecting and is not in her own seat.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Redcliffe, resume your seat. There is no point of order.

Mr HOLSWICH: The Newman government made a strong commitment to businesses in the lead-up to this year's election. We made a commitment to cut government red tape and government green tape and regulation by 20 per cent. We made a commitment to get out of the way of business as much as possible and let business owners get on with what they are good at: running their business, employing staff and making a profit. The reforms in this bill will contribute to that commitment and they will also reduce delays and improve certainty for business and will ultimately make it easier and cheaper for businesses to establish themselves in Queensland.

I am pleased also to see that the minister has foreshadowed further potential legislative changes that would benefit other industries and I eagerly await further legislation coming before this House. I am a passionate believer in the value of small businesses to my electorate and to our state and I will continue to do whatever I can to help these businesses succeed. I am proud to be a member of a government that is making supporting small businesses a priority and I am pleased to commend this bill to the House.