



Speech by

Seath Holswich

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

Hansard Wednesday, 28 November 2012

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Mr HOLSWICH** (Pine Rivers—LNP) (9.17 pm): I rise to offer a contribution to the debate on the Economic Development Bill 2012. I would like to start my contribution by commending the Deputy Premier for introducing this bill. The reason I commend the Deputy Premier is that what is contained within this bill epitomises the Newman government and sets it apart from other recent Queensland governments. The things that set this government apart from previous governments in this place in recent years is two things: common-sense decisions that have been brought forward in legislation and an ability to tackle the hard issues—hard issues that previous governments did not have the intestinal fortitude to tackle. It is apparent that they still want to have their head in the sand even whilst in opposition.

In my short contribution today I want to touch on one particular aspect of this bill, because it was an important issue and possibly one of the most contentious in this bill and I think it highlights significantly the differences between the opposition and the Newman government. I talk particularly of the issue of temporary emissions licences, TELs. This bill looks to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to allow a TEL to be granted in emergency situations, allowing for the release of water from mines during an emergency event in a way that balances environmental outcomes and economic considerations. I would surmise from the member for South Brisbane's contribution tonight that balancing these different priorities—environmental outcomes and economic considerations—is not something that is particularly high on the priority list for the opposition. It seems to be interested in green extremism at the expense of all else.

This particular issue of legacy water in mines and water in mines from flood events was put in the too-hard basket by the former Labor government for way too long. Their plan, it would seem, was to have no plan, to let the water just sit in mines and not do anything with it because they could not bring themselves to make a decision. Leadership requires the ability to make tough decisions, and that was simply something the former government could not bring itself to do. So, as a result, we see mines across Queensland today that are still having to deal with the ongoing aftermath of the 2010-11 floods. Whilst I acknowledge that this bill does not address those legacy issues, it does assure that in future flood events there will be a clearly defined plan and process to be followed to ensure mine water can be released in the safest possible manner.

On issues of balancing environmental and economic considerations, it is interesting to note that opposition members seemed to assert during the committee deliberations that economic considerations of mining companies or the broader economy should not be a huge consideration in these decisions and that environmental considerations should trump all else. I would suggest that that attitude is one of the reasons they left our state in the debt and deficit mess that our government inherited from them earlier this year. The former government, as has been evidenced many times over, was one that was captive not to those with genuine environmental concerns but to the extreme green fringe. I have no problems with those who have concerns about the environment—I share those concerns myself—but when you pander to the extreme green fringe then you are entering dangerous waters.

When you look at the economic impact of the 2010-11 floods on Queensland you see there was a loss of \$5.7 billion in gross state product for the year ending June 2011 and a significant reduction in mining royalties for the state government. What it showed is that, when you put extreme green views ahead of all else, when you fail to take legitimate and economic considerations into account and when you fail to make decisions at all, you put the state's economy in a precarious position, and we cannot afford to do that. The Floods Commission of Inquiry recommended that action be taken on these issues, and the Newman government is pleased to be acting on those recommendations.

It appeared from the member for South Brisbane's speech tonight that she and her speechwriter must not have read many of the amendments because a number of the issues that she mentioned were actually covered in the recommendations, and I thank the minister for the environment for pointing out a few of those things tonight. She seemed to be full of conspiracy theories and full of condemnation, but do you know what the member for South Brisbane was not full of? She was not full of answers, she was not full of amendments and she was not full of constructive input. It was green extremism at the expense of all else.

If my memory serves me correctly, when we sat in this chamber for the public hearings, one of the environmental groups tabled a submission to the committee—as they had not had time to submit that beforehand—but from what I saw the member for South Brisbane already had a copy of that submission. The member for South Brisbane wants to stand in this place and suggest that we are beholden to particular interests, but I would suggest that there is extremism happening that she is not willing to acknowledge.

I would like to thank the Deputy Premier for accepting many of the recommendations of the committee and particularly for taking on board recommendation 14, which is one I want to point out briefly. It changes the word 'emergent' to 'applicable'. Whilst it might seem like a very minor change, this change will hopefully eliminate any confusion that is caused by the use of terms 'emergent' and 'emergency' in different parts of the bill.

I realise that I have not touched on much of this bill tonight, and it is quite a diverse bill. I want to pay tribute to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee and the committee secretariat for the work that went into the committee stage of this bill. Whilst it might have been a tight time frame that the committee was working within, we still received 22 written submissions and had very positive and productive public briefings and hearings. I believe we have provided a strong set of recommendations for consideration, and again I think this is shown by the fact that many of these recommendations have been taken on board.

I particularly want to place on record my thanks to our outgoing committee chair, the member for Mirani. As a newcomer to this place this year, I have been consistently impressed by the leadership of the member for Mirani and the way he has guided the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee. Whilst he will be missed from our committee, our loss is a huge gain for Queensland's emergency volunteers, and I wish him well in his new role as assistant minister.

As I said at the outset, this is an important bill for Queensland. It is about getting our state back on track. It is about building a better Queensland. I am pleased to be part of a government that is actually putting up answers and not burying its head in the sand. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.