



Speech By
Deb Frecklington


MEMBER FOR NANANGO

QUEENSLAND CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (JUSTICES OF THE PEACE) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 1292, on motion of Mr Bleijje—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (8.14 pm): I rise to support the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Justices of the Peace) Amendment Bill 2013. I want to thank the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice for bringing this bill before the House, as this bill honours one of the Newman government's election commitments to trial an expansion of the role of justices of the peace for minor civil disputes. Our aim is to reduce court and tribunal backlogs. Becoming a justice of the peace is an honourable role which is taken with pride and enthusiasm within the community. JPs are the quiet achievers volunteering their time to ensure the cogs of our system keep turning. Amongst other things, justices of the peace witness our important documents, certify copies of documents, issue summonses and warrants, undertake minor breach duties and can attend at police records of interviews. They are integral in the administration of justice within Queensland.

Mr Rickuss: And have been for a long time.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer; they have been for a very long time. JPs do not take their duty lightly. They take on their roles knowing that they have a vital and responsible role to play in the community and are, at times, dealing with matters of crucial importance to people's lives. I want to mention a JP from the Nanango electorate of some note—Mr Nelson Dimond, whom I recently had the honour of presenting a 50-year certificate for his services.

Government members interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is absolutely definitely deserved. This certificate was for his services to the South Burnett community within his role as a JP. Mr Dimond is an excellent example of the pride and professionalism with which people take this role. It was a privilege to present him with this certificate and understand more about how this role has developed over 50 years and the many people that he has served with over those 50 years.

This bill will extend the role of a JP to allow them to contribute, if they wish to do so, to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT. The bill allows for a six-month trial whereby two justices of the peace—one who must be a lawyer—constitute QCAT and hear minor civil disputes with a value of \$5,000 or less and for non-urgent residential tenancy matters. The bill also allows for a \$100 daily sitting fee. This is a really important point to note in this legislation given that JPs are volunteers. Volunteers are the backbone of our communities. All over Queensland these amazing volunteers are doing all of this hard work for absolutely nothing—people like Mr Dimond, who has worked for 50 years as a JP not requesting a cent for the work that he does and the support that he

gives the community and the wonderful people of the South Burnett. Returning to the bill at hand, this trial will start in June 2013 and will be held in Brisbane, Ipswich, Southport, Maroochydore and Townsville. As other speakers in the House today have said, we very much look forward to the success of this trial because areas such as those served by the Nanango, Kingaroy and Toogoolawah courthouses would really appreciate having this service working out of their courts to try to clear the backlog. I also note that Toowoomba has been mooted today as being a wonderful area for this service.

I congratulate the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice for being able to have that service if the trials are successful, which I believe they will. It is an excellent idea to hold this trial and then analyse and evaluate the findings to help our government and the community make an informed decision about whether this program should be extended, modified or ceased. I am very hopeful that this trial will be very successful.

It is important to note that this bill brings back some common sense into the workings of government. It reduces the burden on our courts. It reduces the burden on QCAT. It is just such common sense.

Mr Rickuss: The LNP in action.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. It is the LNP in action. We are looking to reduce red tape, we are looking to reduce the regulatory burden on all of these departments and all of these hardworking people in our communities.

I would also like to note that there was extensive consultation by the committee. I thank the members of the committee and the chair, Mr Ian Berry, for their hard work in examining this bill. It is wonderful to see that the consultation was extensive and that both the committee's work and the consultation resulted in the decision that this bill should be brought before the House as soon as possible.

I have already noted the importance of volunteers. In the time remaining to me I want to talk about the wonderful work that the JPs are doing within the Nanango electorate and the hard work that the JP branch is doing in bringing JP services to the regions. These wonderful areas—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Absolutely, across the South Burnett and the Somerset. We have been fortunate enough to work with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and his department to set up and utilise the JP branch.

Mr Cox: There is a lot of work there.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take that interjection. A lot of work is being done. We have been able to set up these workshops by utilising the JP branch across the South Burnett. I encourage all members of this House to contact the JP branch and utilise this amazing service, particularly if they represent regional areas, because this LNP government is able to take this service out to the regions and provide extra training for JPs. I congratulate the Attorney-General for bringing this service to the regions, because I know that the justices of the peace in my electorate are very thankful for all the support that they are now getting from the Newman LNP government. I would like to commend this bill to the House.