




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

QUEENSLAND BUILDING SERVICES AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (12.18 pm): I rise in the chamber today to speak in favour of the Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Bill 2013. Firstly, I too wish to thank the Minister for Housing and Public Works, the Hon. Tim Mander, for his excellent work in reviewing the QBSA. The building and construction industries are such an important foundation of our economy. Therefore, it is essential that our state's governing body is both effective and efficient.

On 2 August 2012 members of this House agreed to allow the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee to conduct an inquiry into the Queensland Building Services Authority. On 30 November the subsequent report was tabled in parliament. I am pleased to speak in favour of this bill, which is the first stage of the Newman government's response to the committee's findings.

The Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Bill 2013 will seek to alter the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991. It will provide mechanisms to establish the Queensland Building and Construction Commission in place of the QBSA. Secondly, it will ensure the appointment of a governing board, which will be responsible to the Minister for Housing and Public Works. Finally, it will provide an opportunity for a commissioner to be appointed, thus answerable to the governing body. Residents in my electorate of Chatsworth can rest assured that the LNP government is committed to ensuring positive changes are made to this vital organisation in Queensland.

With recent natural disasters and the subsequent building works required across Queensland, it is essential that a governing body exists to protect the interests of the builder and the consumer. For too long the Queensland Building Services Authority has been deemed a 'toothless tiger', as well as ineffective in governing the building industry. This commission will have similar functions to the current QBSA. However, it will ensure that the processes are streamlined for stakeholders in the building industry. Like many government organisations, the former Labor state government had left the QBSA to languish and lapse as an efficient organisation in Queensland.

This amendment bill will provide a framework for the commission to reflect the structure of a public company similar to the Residential Tenancies Authority. It is indeed timely that Queensland, this great state with great opportunity, moves towards a more strategic direction. Without clear direction this organisation would not be able to respond to the challenges present in the Queensland building industry. As I mentioned before, Queensland has suffered more than its fair share of natural disasters, and reconstruction is absolutely essential. Therefore, an organisation needs to exist to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected in a timely manner.

As a result of this amendment bill, the incoming board will clearly define its strategic, operational, financial and administrative policies. It will ensure that there is more accountability and transparency when it comes to the activities of the commission. Particularly in my treasured electorate of Chatsworth, this new commission will ensure that residents who undertake renovations on their home in, say, Carina or Belmont or who decide to build in expanding areas such as Wakerley or Tingalpa will have the peace of mind that this commission is overseeing the building industry.

When the Newman government came to power on 26 March last year, Queenslanders were promised accountability and transparency. The board will consist of seven members, which comprises of a chair and deputy chair appointed by the Governor in Council. Board members will not have tenure longer than three years and the commissioner will not be a member. Indeed, the Newman government is committed to selecting people on their merits. Therefore, these board members will be selected on their ability to contribute in a meaningful way. Board members will be required to disclose any conflict of interests and will be obligated to refrain from decision making when it comes to those interests.

Let's cut to the chase here. The ALP for the past 20 years or so has selected various board members based on their faction or union connections. We know this to be true. The LNP prides itself on selecting candidates for such board positions on their merits and capabilities. Let me repeat that again for the benefit of the seven comrades from the Peel Street politburo across the chamber—merits and capabilities.

This amendment bill will set out clear guidelines for the functions of the board. There will not be a vague directive. By direct contrast to the former Beattie-Bligh governments, it will set out the objectives to be clearly achieved. It will be bound to ensure that the commission is effective and efficient, and it will also review the policies under the act as well as provide guidance to the commissioner.

The board will not be a talkfest. It will advise the minister on the relevant issues as well as discuss unfair or unconscionable trading practices that impact on the viability of subcontractors—a very important point. It will be a constructive and consultative board, ensuring that it engages the building industry and consumers to further progress this vital industry in Queensland. For far too long government in this state has not properly consulted, thus not comprehending the real-life ramifications of policy and legislation that it imposes. We should never forget that the decisions we make in this hallowed chamber result in real-life ramifications for the people we all represent. The Queensland Building and Construction Commission will enable and empower the building industry rather than be a hindrance to the people who are trying to make an honest living or build their own slice of paradise.

Finally, the appointed commissioner will have a defined role in that he or she will be primarily responsible for implementing the strategic direction that the board outlines. The commissioner will have many similar responsibilities as the former general manager. Again, this amendment bill ensures that accountability and transparency are of paramount importance, and the commission will be required to disclose any conflicts of interest. For the benefit of the ALP tyros opposite, I restate that, if there is a conflict of interest, the commissioner will be required to remove themselves from the decision-making process. Now I realise that this is a very foreign concept to those across the chamber.

I am delighted to speak in favour of this legislation as a person who was involved in the private sector property development industry before entering politics. Unlike those across the chamber, I truly understand the importance of the building and construction industry and the role that government and undue interference can have on businesses. Make no mistake: this is important legislation. It is essential that this amendment bill be supported to get this state back on track and to make sure that this great state bounces back from the Beattie-Bligh governments' mismanagement, endless red tape and excessive regulation.

I wish to again thank the Minister for Housing and Public Works as well as his staff for their commendable work. I also take this opportunity to thank the committee that has conducted the inquiry. I thoroughly commend this important bill to the House.