




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2014

**CONSTRUCTION AND TOURISM (RED TAPE REDUCTION) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Second Reading

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (9.58 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I thank the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its consideration of the Construction and Tourism (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The committee has made one recommendation about the bill, which is that it be passed. I thank the committee for that recommendation. The government will be accepting that recommendation.

I also thank the seven organisations that made written submissions to the committee to assist its consideration of the bill. These included the Tatts Group, Clubs Queensland, the Queensland Resources Council, the Australian Christian Lobby, the RSL & Services Clubs Association of Queensland, the Anglican Church Southern Queensland and the Bar Association of Queensland.

The bill continues the government's important commitment to reducing unnecessary regulation and red tape not only on business but also on our community organisations.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Minister, could I ask you to pause for just a moment. Members, if you have a conversation you would like to conduct, please do it outside the chamber. The minister is on his feet and needs to be heard.

Mr BLEIJIE: Very rude, isn't it, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, these amendments represent this government's sensible and responsible approach to reducing the impacts of unnecessary regulation and red tape that is stifling growth. We went to the last election with a commitment to grow a four-pillar economy based on tourism, construction, agriculture and resources and to also reduce red tape and regulation by 20 per cent. This bill ticks off on all those commitments as well as our strong plan to revitalise front-line services for families by streamlining the grants process for our hardworking community organisations.

The bill clarifies components of the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991 to ensure an equitable and efficient system of portable long service leave in the building and construction industry. In addition, the bill takes into consideration concerns raised by the Queensland Resources Council regarding the changing face of building and construction and its integration with the mining industry, by ensuring the portable long service leave scheme is fair and equitable across the resources sector and maintains simplicity and efficiency in administration.

The bill provides cost savings and minimises red tape to the system through the following changes: by removing the GST component from the leviable cost of work—it is estimated that this will save the industry approximately \$10 million per annum; by clarifying those who are not substantially engaged in the building and construction industry and not required to pay the levy; by removing the costs associated with undertaking feasibility studies and environmental impact assessments from the leviable cost of work, enabling expected savings of approximately \$0.5 million per annum; by clarifying long service leave eligibility for building and construction workers; and by confirming that private certifiers as well as councils are remunerated for sighting the requisite notification and payment form for a development application approval.

Importantly, this bill enables significant regulatory changes that will provide further savings and red-tape reduction for the industry and, in turn, the Queensland public. These include reducing the QLeave levy rate from 0.3 per cent to 0.25 per cent, saving industry \$23.6 million per year; increasing the minimum threshold of leviable building and construction work from \$80,000 to \$150,000, saving a further \$2.5 million per year; and introducing a tiered levy rate for projects worth over \$1 billion, which will create savings of up to \$10 million. The amount of leave, or availability of leave, for building and construction industry workers will not change as a result of this bill. The only thing it will change is a substantial saving for builders, particularly small builders and big builders in the state.

This bill also reduces red tape on the gaming industry, specifically for the community club sector. I know that all honourable members have talked to me in the past about the community club sector. Our golf clubs, our surf clubs, our RSLs—the great community clubs that bind our communities together on many occasions—are very happy with the regulation, red tape and liquor licensing reforms that this government has initiated over the last two years. This is the third bill that this government has introduced that addresses recommendations made by the liquor and gaming expert panel, which I appointed in September 2012 to review liquor and gaming laws and make recommendations to reduce red tape.

The reforms in this bill are necessary to assist the long-term financial viability of community clubs. Community clubs play an important role in our society by bringing people together to build social capital, create employment opportunities and provide entertainment and recreational facilities for our communities. They also help to fund local not-for-profit groups such as schools and junior sport coaching. Unfortunately, many community clubs are struggling. In fact, Clubs Queensland has reported that, on average, 13 small clubs close their doors each year. The closure of these clubs has a detrimental impact on our communities, particularly for regional areas where these clubs can often be the main 'hub' for social and community activities.

The reforms in the bill remove unnecessary red tape and restrictions on clubs to assist them to adapt and remain viable and to continue to provide important services to their local communities. I am pleased the committee supports the removal of the 'near rule', which will facilitate larger clubs to establish new club premises in greenfield areas and to assist struggling clubs to prevent their closure. The bill also removes the requirement for club gaming machine entitlements to be sold within specific regional boundaries. This will allow clubs to trade their entitlements with any licensed club within the state according to supply and demand without artificial market constraints. I note that the member for Gladstone raised this issue in the parliament some time ago, and we are more than happy to be addressing that today.

As noted by the committee, there is little justification in maintaining a system that potentially prevents struggling clubs, particularly in the regions, from divesting themselves of gaming machine entitlements simply because of their geographic location. I again point out that the member for Gladstone raised this issue in parliament a few months ago about regional boundaries for gaming entitlements, and we are happy to be addressing that in this bill—again, building a strong economy and supporting our local community clubs, just doing what we said we would in 2012 during the election campaign. Similarly, inhibiting market forces by creating an artificial market where successful clubs are unable to source additional gaming machine entitlements limits the opportunities for growth of such clubs and the benefits that they provide to their communities.

The bill will also allow a regulation to prescribe a different maximum number of gaming machines based on the number of sites operating under a licence. As is currently the case, no more than 300 machines will be allowed at any one venue and the overall cap on the number of gaming machines in clubs will remain—I point out: will remain—at 24,705.

I note that in their submission to the committee, the Australian Christian Lobby and the Social Responsibilities Committee of the Anglican Church of Southern Queensland raised concerns about the reforms impacting on problem gambling and questioned the necessity of the proposed removal of gaming restrictions. As the committee acknowledged in its report, the removal of these regulatory restrictions will foster growth and development in this important and struggling sector of our community—our community clubs—and are not intended to, and will not result in, an increase in problem gambling.

The bill also amalgamates the existing casino and gambling community benefit funds to create a single streamlined grant program for Queensland. Amalgamating these funds will address the Queensland Commission of Audit recommendation to streamline and consolidate grant programs across government. Simplifying these grant programs will also support recent recommendations of the Queensland Audit Office to improve accessibility, governance and consistency across the funds. These reforms will make life easier for grant applicants, who will now spend less time and effort interpreting their eligibility under different program guidelines and applying for grants. The reforms will also create greater equity in the distribution of available grant funds to community organisations right across the state. The bill also makes other minor changes to the gaming legislation to remove a number of unnecessary business reporting requirements and improve the clarity and efficiency of the legislation.

The bill inserts a new provision in the Reprints Act 1992 that allows the structure of particular laws to be brought into line with current drafting practice, provided the structural change does not change the effect of the law. The amendment is designed to facilitate the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel's eLegislation project, which is implementing a new electronic legislative drafting and publishing system. As part of the project, all electronic files for current Queensland legislation are to be converted to Extensible Markup Language format. The Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts will understand 'Extensible Markup Language format' better than I would, but this bill will allow whatever that is to happen, and it is exciting. No doubt the minister for IT will be very excited about that. Extensible Markup Language format is generally referred to as XML.

Presently, electronic data is stored using proprietary software, and organisations other than the OQPC that use the data incur additional costs of converting it for use. In contrast, XML is independent of any proprietary software. The change to XML will create a more flexible and cost-effective structured data source of Queensland legislation for business, the community and other government agencies. I might stop on that point and, on behalf of all honourable members, express my thanks for the change to the structure of legislation on behalf of all the constituents who will be able to access these new XML files when they go and read all the significant legislation in the Queensland statute books.

The costs of converting the electronic files, as I said, will be significantly reduced. The amendment has a narrow application. Importantly, the amendment does not permit changing the structure of legislation in a way that changes its legal effect. The amendment is stated to expire on 31 December 2014, by which time OQPC will have completed the standardisation of legislation and the conversion of electronic files to XML. In addition to the reduction in conversion costs mentioned earlier, standardising the format of Queensland legislation will result in lower maintenance costs for the electronic legislative and publishing system once implemented. The amendments to the Reprints Act 1992 is a key step in the delivery of OQPC's eLegislation project, which in turn will deliver a new, modern, streamlined, electronic statute book that is easily accessible by all members of the community.

The bill also repeals—and I note the honourable Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games is in the House tonight; she will be particularly excited about these reforms—the Queensland Travel Agents Act 1988 to deregulate travel agents. This repeal will assist the Queensland government to achieve its election commitment to cut red tape for business. More Australian travellers are making their own travel arrangements through the internet, rather than using travel agents. It is now estimated that only one-third of travel transactions are covered by the consumer protections offered by state and territory travel agents acts and the current national compensation scheme. As we have always indicated, travel agents do play a huge role in tourism and the tourism potential in Queensland. Deregulating their businesses and ensuring less red tape for the businesses certainly will favour them. In response to the changing travel market, I and my fellow ministers for consumer affairs have agreed to deregulate the national travel industry through

the Travel Industry Transition Plan. The plan sets out a number of actions including repealing state and territory travel agents acts by 30 June 2014, establishing a voluntary industry accreditation scheme and closing the national travel compensation scheme, the Travel Compensation Fund, by mid- to late 2015.

There are currently over 500 licensed travel agents in Queensland. Post repeal of the act, travel agents will no longer be required to be licensed with the Queensland government or contribute funds to the national Travel Compensation Fund. The Australian Federation of Travel Agents is well underway in developing a new and voluntary accreditation scheme, ATAS, which is expected to commence on 1 July 2014. The scheme will have a wider coverage than the existing regulatory framework as it will be available to not only travel agents, but also suppliers of travel and travel related services. Two significant stakeholders, Flight Centre and Mobile Travel Agents, have already publicly stated their intention to join ATAS. ATAS member businesses may choose to obtain insolvency insurance to cover collapses of suppliers of travel services, such as airlines and hotels, as well as their own risk of insolvency. These are new insurance products in Australia on offer to Queenslanders. Travel consumers will be encouraged to deal with ATAS member businesses and, specifically, to choose ATAS member businesses that have taken out the insolvency insurance products, covering both travel agent and travel supplier collapses.

The Travel Industry Transition Plan also encourages reliance on existing acts, remedies and oversight schemes, particularly the Australian Consumer Law, which commenced in 2011 and covers all Australian businesses. In addition, I propose to move some minor technical amendments during consideration in detail to the Industrial Relations Act 1999 and the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2009.

This government has a strong commitment and a strong plan for a brighter future. These reforms continue our agenda to make sure that Queensland remains a great place with great opportunities. I commend the bill to the House.