




Speech By  
**Rob Molhoek**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

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## **SUSTAINABLE PLANNING (INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.56 pm): I rise this evening to speak in support of the Sustainable Planning (Infrastructure Charges) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. This bill addresses the challenging issue of infrastructure charges and provides a way forward that will encourage development and also ensure that local authorities have the funds necessary to build local infrastructure such as roads and water and sewage treatment plants. The reforms will deliver an infrastructure charges framework that is fair and supports the long-term sustainability of local governments and water distributor-retailers and provides assurance to the development industry when planning and delivering projects.

Under the old regime of the previous government we saw priority infrastructure plans that were onerous, that were expensive to produce, that were loaded with red tape and there was state review after state review. That made it very difficult for councils to effectively prepare and deliver infrastructure plans and policies and pricing policies such that they could provide any security to the development industry. In fact, the old system was incredibly cumbersome. Not only did the previous government make the system cumbersome by introducing its regime of red tape and overmanagement, they also took away from councils the traditional headworks, subsidies and support that were there in the past.

This bill before us is evidence of our government's strong commitment to genuine and robust stakeholder consultation and engagement. I am proud to stand in the House tonight and speak about that engagement process. Of the 13 stakeholder meetings that were conducted since February of last year, I personally had the privilege, the honour and the opportunity to attend most of those in my role working with the Deputy Premier as Assistant Minister for Planning Reform. Those 13 workshops were held between February of last year and right up until April of this year, with key local authority and development industry stakeholders. It was particularly pleasing for me to see not only some of the state's top industry groups there but also that councils were well represented, both through the LGAQ and the direct involvement of people like the director for planning from the Gold Coast, Gail Connolly. The workshops were a collaborative effort and identified key framework issues and provided a valuable opportunity for us as a government to test the options for reform. The result of those discussions is the legislation that we have before us here in the House tonight. The workshops were supported by the release of discussion papers for public consultation in July of last year. Those papers proposed options and sought opinions, and more than 80 submissions were received from a large range of stakeholders. In general, the submissions demonstrated support for the government's reform agenda to create a more equitable, certain and consistent long-term framework.

We heard from the member for Mundingburra earlier this evening about the frustrations and challenges of his firsthand experience with the entire process as a former councillor in Townsville and how the development industry was significantly bogged down. It made it very difficult for both councils and industry to get on with the job of construction and development.

I note with great pleasure that one of the four pillars and one of the priorities of our government has been to get the construction industry going. As I stand here tonight, I firmly believe that these reforms will provide that certainty and that incentive to the development industry to get moving as the economy starts to improve and turn. This certainty ensures things like transport infrastructure charges and other charges have a degree of capping and accountability around them. It also ensures that we can provide a charging framework to the development industry right around the country that will make Queensland more attractive for investment and, as such, drive economic growth and employment opportunities here in Queensland.

The program that the government is proposing in support of this is also a co-investment program. Whereas in the past the previous government withdrew all of the headwork subsidies and grants, our government has recognised that not only do we need fairer and more reasonable infrastructure charges and not only does the industry need responsible framework and certainty around the caps but also they need the government to re-engage. I commend the Deputy Premier and the department on the work that they have done in preparing policy initiatives around funding catalyst infrastructure into the future to assist development that supports economic growth.

One of the other key issues we have discussed in the context of this legislation is the need for fair value charges. It is pleasing to see that some councils have already taken up that challenge. I note that the Fraser Coast is already offering significant incentives to the development industry by coming in well below the maximum capped charge and is seeing some great responses. I know last year the Gold Coast City Council offered some \$23 million worth of subsidies to the industry, and the spin-off of that was that about \$800 million worth of new projects were started and are on their way to stimulate the local construction industry. I note also that the Cairns council has been very aggressive in its infrastructure charges policy and pricing in supporting the industry and has retained its capped charges well below the current maximum cap. These councils are proving that the concept of a fair value charge is feasible. They also understand it is important, and it is great to see some of these local government authorities actually getting on with the job of supporting our agenda to stimulate economic growth through the construction industry.

It is my great pleasure to stand in the House this evening and speak in support of this legislation. I have to say that it has been an incredible privilege to be a very small part of it in working with the Deputy Premier and the department and his team. I wholeheartedly support this bill in the House.