




Speech By
Hon. Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2014

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (6.14 pm), in reply: I thank honourable members for their interest and their contribution to the debate this afternoon and last night on the Professional Engineers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In particular, I once again want to thank the members of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for their diligence and the hard work that they put into examining this legislation. I would also like to acknowledge those who made submissions on the bill and those who took the time to present their arguments before the committee. I will be moving some minor amendments to the bill during the consideration in detail stage which will help clarify the bill and make editorial changes or promote consistency with the remainder of the bill and its intent. I will quickly address some of the issues that were raised during the debate.

I refer to the member for Rockhampton's contribution and thank him for his recognition that changes to the Professional Engineers Act are strongly supported by the industry. I do have to take issue with the member's suggestion that the QBCC will not be as good as PIC at regulating the industry. There is absolutely zero evidence to support that view. In fact I would like to quote the executive director of the Master Plumbers Association of Queensland who said, 'MPAQ is of the view the QBCC is committed to working with the plumbing industry to ensure a high standard of licensing is maintained and strengthened. The level of engagement MPAQ has experienced with the Commissioner would indicate this to be true.' I know that they are delighted with the way the commissioner is engaging with them and know that their views are being heard and that they will continue to be engaged with the commission in a very active way.

I note with some amusement the member for Rockhampton's comments about Labor's policy being to replace the PIC with a new body that sits within the QBCC. For all intents and purposes, that is exactly what this legislation does. As a result of this bill, the staff at the Plumbing Industry Council will transfer over to the QBCC with the same pay, leave and super entitlements that they are on now. So Labor's plan for regulating the plumbing industry is to do exactly what the LNP is doing but to do it six months after we have already done it.

I want to thank the member for Thuringowa for his contribution around the need to protect consumers. As he rightly pointed out, most consumers do not have sufficient knowledge about the skills of different engineers due to the technical nature of professional engineering services. Additionally, potential problems may not emerge until well after the service has been provided, such as issues with the footings of a house.

The member also spoke of the need to ensure that people living outside of Queensland are registered in Queensland if they are working on projects here. Approximately 25 per cent of engineers registered under the act reside either interstate or overseas. Although not explicitly stated in the current act, the rules of statutory interpretation together with judicial authority strongly support that the PE Act requires engineers who provide professional engineering services outside of Queensland for

Queensland projects to be registered under the act or directly supervised by a registered professional engineer. However, there have been frequent requests from the profession that there be a clear statement in the act to avoid confusion amongst engineers outside of Queensland, and this amendment provides this clarity.

I thank the member for Ferny Grove for his contribution around exclusions. This amendment clearly demonstrates the Newman government's commitment to consultation and listening to relevant stakeholders. The amendments relating to exclusions come about following industry feedback provided as part of the parliamentary inquiry into the performance of the old Building Services Authority. Unlike Labor who just want to dictate to industry, we work with them and listen.

I thank the member for Gladstone for her comments and support. The member asked for some clarification around the new provision allowing the board to reject complaints if it considers it to be unfounded or lacking in substance. It is intended that the additional words will enable the board to reject complaints which are not frivolous, trivial or vexatious but are based on some sort of misunderstanding or do not have sufficient substance to justify an investigation. For example, the board would be able to reject a complaint if it relates to a contractual dispute between a consumer and a professional engineer and does not have anything to do with the engineer's professional conduct.

I thank the member for Warrego for his support and, as always, his stewardship of the committee. I thank him for his recognition that the bill will improve the structure of industry and take the industry forward. That is what this government is all about—driving growth in the construction industry, unlike Labor who just want to tie it up in red tape.

I thank the member for Murrumba for his contribution, particularly his highly amusing preamble. I note his comments about the strength of the construction industry in his electorate. The construction industry is a key driver of economic growth in Murrumba, just as it is right throughout the state. It employs around 250,000 Queenslanders and generates around \$60 billion for the economy, which is why it is so important that we have a regulator in place that is up to date, customer focused and capable of keeping standards high.

I say thanks to the member for Springwood, who spoke passionately about the need to protect consumers. Comprehensive registration is essential for ensuring the protection of consumers by restricting the practice of engineering to those who have demonstrated the required level of qualifications and skills. With regard to some of those stories that the member relayed about failures of engineers operating in his electorate, I would encourage the member to advise his constituents that complaints about the conduct of engineers can always be referred to the board for proper investigation.

I thank the member for Gaven for his recognition that the old BSA was very much in need of renewal and I welcome his support for changes to the QBCC and licensing arrangements, particularly regarding pool safety. With regard to the member's comments about one of his constituents who has issues with the Plumbing Industry Council, I can confirm that if he is referring to the case of Mr Darren Creswell my office responded to his correspondence on 27 August. If he was referring to another matter, I would be happy for the member to raise that matter directly with my office at his convenience.

I thank the member for Algeester, who spoke about the new licensing regime reducing the cost of licences. I know that he is concerned about the cost of living, as all government members are. I am glad that he has recognised that. I would also like to second the member's commendation of the member for Warrego and his leadership of the committee. I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his usual good contribution and I also thank the member for Burdekin for hers. In conclusion, I would like to thank once more all honourable members for their interest and their contribution to the debate.