




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2015

BUILDING QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (8.05 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in support of this bill. As a state of growth and the most decentralised state in Australia, building infrastructure is a central core of our economy, and it has always been since Queensland was created. For example, the most important infrastructure project in the 19th century was our railway system. Between 1887 and 1893, we built 3,000 kilometres of railway. That meant we could have an export market for our pastoral industry that was worth 95 per cent of our economy at that time and was probably the foundation for most of the jobs in Queensland at that stage.

Here in the 21st century though, at a time when job creation is more important than ever, Building Queensland is what Queensland needs at this moment. We have heard a lot from members tonight about what Building Queensland will do. I think another important function of Building Queensland is to help build confidence amongst our private sector operators. That is what I want to focus on in this speech.

In their submission to the parliamentary committee, Engineers Australia said that the private sector needs confidence. Building Queensland will build confidence by overseeing the pipeline of infrastructure projects. Mr Quinn, the CEO of Building Queensland, said that it is clear the private sector is looking for a pipeline. It needs to know there is a steady flow of projects coming onto the market. Mr Quinn said that, with certainty, the private sector can make sure it has the right resources and the right skill set to match those projects—which means they are looking to employ more people. What is more, we will build confidence by ensuring continuity.

Mr Quinn pointed out that the private sector does not want a number of big projects and then a period of no projects and no activity. Building Queensland will ensure that we have that smooth, consistent flow of projects. Building Queensland will strengthen the confidence of business, and with that confidence we will create more jobs for Queenslanders—jobs now and jobs for the future.

One final point I want to make is that Building Queensland will look at the social sustainability and social return of these projects. This is an important part of cost-benefit analysis and business cases for local infrastructure projects. I think it is clear from the hearings that the LNP does not fully appreciate the importance of examining social sustainability. Looking at social sustainability or social benefits means looking at the impacts beyond the financial effects, such as how much tax income it generates. Some of the social effects that could be examined by Building Queensland are these: does it compromise public safety; does it raise the level of pollution, whether it is noise pollution or CO₂ emissions; does it distort the labour market?

Building Queensland can look at any of these indirect costs or benefits that are passed on to the producers and consumers—our society—outside the market sector that contains those projects. In a more traditional cost-benefit analysis these costs or benefits could be ignored as they are hard to monetise. But Queenslanders will understand and appreciate that Building Queensland can examine

the social costs or benefits of these projects. They know, for example, that there is a greater benefit to a congestion-busting road project than just cutting travel time and CO₂ emissions. They know it delivers a social benefit to have less time spent on the road because it means more time spent with the family. It means less stress when you arrive at work. They know you cannot express these things as a dollar amount, but these are exactly the things that Building Queensland can calculate when analysing a project. I know Queenslanders will surely appreciate Building Queensland when this new body considers the social impact of these projects. More than ever, they will appreciate the jobs that will be brought forward by these infrastructure projects.