




Speech By  
**Glenn Butcher**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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### **BUILDING QUEENSLAND BILL**

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (4.29 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Building Queensland Bill. I would like to thank the other committee members and the secretariat for all the hard work that they did over the time that we considered this bill. It is important legislation we are about to introduce. This is an important bill in terms of fairness in building infrastructure across Queensland and not just in the south-east corner. For my electorate of Gladstone this is a very important bill that meets our needs into the future and addresses our priorities. I take heart that my electorate will no longer be left in the dark when it comes to vital infrastructure and that we will continue to drive industry and liveability into the future for Gladstone. Under Labor all projects will be funded without selling assets such as the great port of Gladstone. At the last election the opposition even went so far as to try to convince a ports corporation employee to run a campaign to promote the sale of the port that employed him. Shocking!

Building Queensland is a new advisory body that provides the Queensland government with independent expert advice on infrastructure priorities. We bring a whole-of-government perspective to major infrastructure project development, ensuring the government makes better informed decisions on the projects that enhance the quality of life for all Queenslanders and particularly those people who live in Gladstone. Consistent with the government's view of proactive engagement, Building Queensland has consulted and continues to consult with the private sector and across government to ensure that our legislation and operating environment builds certainty and confidence. Some of the key outcomes of Building Queensland will be: to provide independent expert advice to government about infrastructure in Queensland, develop a robust and transparent framework for assessing infrastructure projects, evaluate proposals for new and existing infrastructure, assist or lead the preparation of business cases for infrastructure proposals, prepare an infrastructure pipeline, lead the procurement and delivery of projects only when directed to do so by the minister, and publish information and promote public awareness.

Building Queensland will consider any infrastructure in which initial or further investment is likely to have a significant economic, environmental or social impact in this state. The advice provided by Building Queensland to the government will be based on rigorous analysis, something we have not seen in the past. The advice will take account of forecast growth; economic, social and environmental sustainability; cost-benefit analysis; and community benefits, including social return on investment. This kind of frank and thorough independent advice on infrastructure spending is unprecedented in Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government is delivering on our election commitment to provide independence and transparency when investing in infrastructure projects in Queensland. The Australian Productivity Commission report on its inquiry into public infrastructure was released in July 2014 and called for all state governments and federal governments to subject infrastructure proposals over \$50 million to rigorous cost-benefit analysis, and this bill will do that.

Before the January election we made a commitment to the people of Queensland to plan and deliver the infrastructure that our communities desperately need. We promised to create a new statutory body to ensure we deliver the projects that have the greatest value and community benefits for all Queenslanders, and as I am proud to say again, this bill delivers this to Queensland. The report called for this analysis to be publicly released and made available for due diligence by bidders. This bill delivers on these recommendations.

Building Queensland will develop a framework to assess costs and benefits of infrastructure projects that will be utilised across the whole of government. Work on this framework has already commenced with the examination of models used internationally and domestically already underway by the team. Building Queensland will lead business case preparation where the estimated capital cost or the net present value of financial commitments entered into by the state is \$100 million or more. Building Queensland will assist in business case preparation for costs between \$50 million and \$100 million. In addition, the minister will also have the option to direct Building Queensland to lead or to assist in preparation of the business case for other infrastructure proposals. Building Queensland will be required to promote the public awareness of its functions and to publish on its website a summary of any cost-benefit analysis in which Building Queensland took the lead.

Submissions to the inquiry universally supported the establishment of Building Queensland. I think we all agree on that today. Importantly, the view of most witnesses to the inquiry was that establishing Building Queensland would not present any further red tape nor delay infrastructure projects currently in the works. This was an important consideration for all of our committee members. It is important to maintain the goal of transparency, accountability and due diligence in infrastructure planning while not adding additional layers of bureaucracy and unnecessary time delays. Submissions to the inquiry noted some of the key benefits of the bill including: bringing a whole-of-government perspective to major infrastructure projects, greater transparency so that the industry benefits from information about the costs and benefits of competing priorities and public confidence in assessment of infrastructure projects.

As part of the consultation, the committee unanimously recommended that the bill be amended to include publishing of the infrastructure pipeline document after providing six-monthly updates to the minister. I am also pleased that the recommendation from the committee to include timely public reporting of ministerial directions to Building Queensland was accepted and amended in the current form.

Building Queensland represents a positive direction for the infrastructure industry in Queensland. I commend this bill to the House.