




Speech By  
**Michael Hart**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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**BUILDING QUEENSLAND BILL**

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (4.37 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Building Queensland Bill 2015. As the House would be aware, on 19 May 2015 the Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade, the Hon. Jackie Trad MP, introduced the Building Queensland Bill 2015 into the parliament and it was referred to my committee, the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee. Throughout the committee process we heard contributions from the relevant departments and particularly from groups like the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the LGAQ, the Property Council of Australia, Infrastructure Association of Queensland and various other peak bodies including councils and stakeholders. The policy objectives of the bill being introduced are to provide for the establishment of a new independent statutory advisory body called Building Queensland. Building Queensland will 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 certain business cases for infrastructure proposals, prepare an infrastructure priority pipeline document, lead the procurement and delivery of projects only when they are directed to by the minister, and publish information and promote public awareness. On the face of it, that all sounds really good.

Building Queensland will not operate as an advocate for particular projects. Rather, it will ensure a consistent standard of cost-benefit analysis which in turn will allow it to make robust recommendations to government about infrastructure priorities. The bill details the functions of Building Queensland and provides it with the necessary powers it requires to effectively perform its functions—

The Bill also provides the necessary head of power for the statutory appointments of the chairperson and members of the board by the Governor in Council and also the appointment of the chief executive officer by the board.

That occurred in April this year. The bill continues—

The implementation of Building Queensland as an independent statutory body will be pivotal in ensuring a whole-of-government perspective is brought to major infrastructure planning and investment in Queensland, supported by, and in collaboration with, line agencies.

After reviewing the Building Queensland Bill 2015, which was introduced by the Deputy Premier, the committee made three recommendations. Before further discussing those recommendations, which were made by a bipartisan committee, I would like to bring to the attention of the House a statement made by the Deputy Premier on 7 May this year. She stated—

We have taken a very strong stand against the wind-back of integrity and accountability measures because we care about this state, we care about clean politics and we care about good public policymaking in this state.

It is an interesting statement, isn't it? On the face of it, it sounds really good. In relation to this bill the Deputy Premier's own explanatory notes state—

No community consultation has occurred on the Bill as the Bill implements a clear election commitment.

We just heard the member for Gladstone say that this government continues to consult, but there was no consultation on this bill. I freely admit that there was in fact a promise by the previous opposition to construct Building Queensland, and it was contained in this document that the member for Clayfield spoke about so eloquently a short while ago. There are a few other things in here that the member for Clayfield did not mention. Apart from the lovely photos that take up three or four pages, there are a couple of interesting bits that I would like to bring to the attention of the House. This document on page 3 states—

It is crucial that the State Government maximises the value of its infrastructure program through the robust assessment and prioritisation of infrastructure investment and the sufficient procurement, financing and delivery of priority infrastructure. The biggest risk to a return to a AAA credit rating is poorly targeted and poorly delivered infrastructure that does not lift the State's productivity.

I have to say that this is a Labor document but I absolutely totally agree with it. The Labor Party really has quite a bad history, and to see that we do not need to look too much further than the \$1.2 billion Health payroll debacle. There is a lot more than that—for example, the \$2½ billion spent on the western corridor recycled water grid. The previous committee that I was involved with went out and had a look at that. When you add the rusting pipes and the other bits of infrastructure all together, that is about \$9 billion worth of infrastructure that is now mothballed. It is not being used, but we still have the debt. We still have to pay for it, but it is just sitting there wasted. I wonder what sort of business case they had for that.

**Mr Rickuss:** Invoice tendering.

**Mr HART:** I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer: invoice tendering. I think we have seen that in a couple of other infrastructure processes that the previous Labor government went through, and I will talk about those shortly. As I said, the committee that I was involved with previously had a look at the western corridor recycled water system and there are some really funny things that went on out there, I can tell you. The desalination plant down on the Gold Coast was another wonderful Labor initiative that cost \$1.2 billion and is switched on every now and then. It is a big bit of infrastructure down on the Gold Coast that really does not do anything. For the new members over here, there was no business case. The Gold Coast City Council thought about the desal plant down there. The previous Labor government came along, stuck their head in the air—once they had pulled it out of the sand—and they said, 'We have to do something because we are going to run out of water.' So they went out and they—

**Mr Rickuss:** Invoice tendered again.

**Mr HART:**—invoice tendered for that desal plant. Interestingly enough, it has a pipe that comes up to Brisbane from the Gold Coast and it crosses directly over the western corridor recycled water pipeline. In fact, there was a hole in the ground there. You could see a photo of one pipe crossing another. But they are not joined, so you cannot use the desalination plant in the western corridor recycled plant because they do not join together. Even if they did join together, the pipe is not big enough to actually take the water. There was no business case. This is the problem that previous Labor governments had and this is the problem that I see with this bill. It looks good on paper and it makes a lot of sense, but if you do not follow through with the process that you put in place then the reality is that it is not going to work. What about the \$350 million that was spent on the Wyaralong Dam? There were no pipes connected to it. It is a nice bit of water out there; it looks like a great place for a picnic.

**Mr Rickuss:** There is a good motorbike track.

**Mr HART:** I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. There is a nice motorbike track out there, but is it any good for us to get any water out of? No, it does not work. There was \$600 million spent on the Traveston Crossing Dam debacle—no business case—a \$2.2 billion blowout in the children's Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast hospitals; ordering tilt trains without seats was very clever. They work really well.

Building Queensland will work if it is used properly, but this government does not have a history of utilising these bits of infrastructure. They talk over and over again about accountability and transparency, but there is none. You are not offering any. Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no accountability and transparency happening inside this government. That is why this committee had to recommend that some of this information be published within a short time frame. I am very happy to hear that the Deputy Premier intends to follow through with the recommendations that came from the committee. It is important that if anything is ever referred to Building Queensland we see the results of it, we see the ministerial directions being given and we hear about the business cases.

But I have not finished with my list of Labor failures yet: the \$150 million blowout in the Smart Card driver's licensing system; \$450 million wasted on the Northern Pipeline Interconnector Stage 2; and who can forget the \$6.1 million Olympic ski jump that went into a pool?

**Mr Dickson** interjected.

**Mr HART:** What was the business case for that one, member for Buderim? Was it that five or six people a year may use that facility and it was going to cost \$6 million? It has been a while since anybody saw it snow in Brisbane, but we need an Olympic ski jump into a pool. That was a great business case!

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said, this process should really work. If Building Queensland has things referred to it, then it makes a lot of sense and I fully support it. What really worries me is that what is supposed to happen is that any business case for a capital cost over \$100 million is referred to Building Queensland.

I will give just a bit of background. I know that the member for Clayfield has already partially covered this. We heard at our committee hearing that a CEO was appointed to Building Queensland on 20 April and that as at 17 August they had 14 staff working there, on their way to 30. I would be interested to know how many staff are working in Building Queensland now. It has a \$5 million budget. As at 17 August, this independent statutory body that has been in place since 20 April had been referred how many projects? How many projects had been sent to Building Queensland in the four months this quango was in place? Zero, none.

**Ms Trad:** So why are you supporting the bill?

**Mr HART:** I think I have already made it perfectly clear—maybe the Deputy Premier was not paying attention; she tends to not pay attention—that in theory this is a good idea. I fully support having a good business case for a project. It is a great idea. But it is no good putting something like this together and then not actually referring anything to it.

In recent weeks the government announced the second stage of light rail on the Gold Coast. I wonder if that was an idea that just popped into their minds at some random stage or if they had been thinking about this for the last six months. I can tell members what they did not do: refer this to Building Queensland so that a rigorous business case could be put together. Do members know why the government did not do that? It is because the government do not want to show the people of Queensland that the business case for this thing just does not stack up properly, so they have hidden this process. That is my point to the other members of the committee. This is a good process—it will work—but it is no good if you do not refer anything to it. I suspect that is exactly what this government will continue to do, over and over again: come up with vague infrastructure plans and then not refer anything to Building Queensland. We will have 30 staff and \$5 million just sitting there, doing nothing. That is my concern.

This morning the Deputy Premier handed down her draft Infrastructure Plan. I have been sitting here for the past half an hour or so reading it. I was interested to read in the *Courier-Mail*—a lot of people get their information from the paper—a statement of the Deputy Premier. The article states—

Asked whether the document was essentially a collation of what Labor already planned to do, Ms Trad said: “Well, there’s a number of new announcements that we’ve already made that have been included.”

What does that mean? Can anybody make head or tail of that? I table that for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 27 October 2015, titled, ‘Here’s One I Prepared Earlier’ [\[1496\]](#).

There is nothing new in this document. For the past 20 minutes or so, while I have been listening to some of the other speeches, I have been flicking through this document to see what is in it for Burleigh. I got to page 70, which refers to justice and public safety. It refers to a Burleigh station upgrade. My fire station is going to be upgraded! Yahoo!

**Mrs Frecklington:** When did that get announced?

**Mr HART:** I think I announced it two years ago. Actually, I think I went to the Burleigh fire station with the then police minister. Last time I drove by, it actually had walls up. When I spoke about this in parliament last, in one of my adjournment speeches, it did not have a roof on it. Thank God those opposite have finally funded this; otherwise, it could have been a very cold winter for some of our fireys down on the Gold Coast. I guess I will not get the opportunity to open that. Unfortunately, I will have to look from the street because no doubt I will not be invited. Maybe I can claim credit for it, member for Mirani, seeing as I announced it and I arranged the funding for it. It is in this document. We are just going over old stuff, aren’t we, Deputy Premier? There is nothing new in this document.

**Ms Trad:** Why didn’t you deliver it? You had three years.

**Mr HART:** I think the member for Clayfield covered it pretty succinctly. We put out a document that had an infrastructure plan in it. The government can rewrite history all they like. Members of the Labor Party can come in here and rewrite history all they like, but the people out there know the story.

They know the good work we did when we were in government. They know the mistakes we made—and we know the mistakes we made, but we are getting on with it.

I do agree with this bill. If it is used appropriately, Building Queensland could provide independent expert advice on infrastructure priorities based on a rigorous cost-benefit analysis as well as community benefits. I just have some doubts that this government are capable of utilising this structure for the benefit of Queensland and instead will hide the financial details of Queensland infrastructure from the people of Queensland. After all, they have history in that area.