




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (5.53 pm): I had written quite a comprehensive speech to give tonight on the Sustainable Ports Development Bill, but I have decided to ditch that and I am just going to talk about some of the issues that were raised in the committee's report and some of the things I have heard here tonight from the government because we have heard some interesting things. I thought the member for Hinchinbrook moved a great motion to help Cairns along, and that was one of the major issues we did hear on our trip around when we were looking at the ports in Queensland that are affected by this particular bill. I will come back to that after dinner, Mr Deputy Speaker.

It is important for members here to recognise that an original version of this bill was introduced by the LNP in late 2014. The bill that is before the House tonight is not much different to what the LNP proposed in 2014. There are only a couple of differences—one is that there is no review period in 2022, and the other is that there is to be no sea dredge disposal, which is something that we were looking at anyway. In hindsight, I guess you could say that the bills are not that different really. I was quite surprised when I heard the minister start his speech in this second reading debate by saying that he had read through the recommendations of the committee—and there are 13 of those—and he was accepting every recommendation, because one of those recommendations states—

The committee unanimously recommends the Minister considers declaring the Port of Cairns as a priority port following a considered assessment of:

- the environmental impacts on the Great Barrier Reef
- the economic benefits to the Cairns region, and
- the government's commitments made to UNESCO and under the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

I thought for a second we were going to see Cairns as a priority port, and that would have been as all members of the committee had agreed and recommended very strongly. We got to that decision after listening to various members of the Cairns community on our visit there. But the Labor members on the committee actually put in a statement of reservation about our own report. They said—

Government Members of the Committee in support of recommendation 12—

which is to make Cairns a priority port—

wish to make it clear that we do not want the future economic development of Cairns to be shut down.


They are the words that the Labor members on the committee used—that they did not want to see the port of Cairns shut down. They came away from our discussion in Cairns thinking that this particular bill, apart from the Cairns Shipping Development Project, may well shut down the port of Cairns, and I will talk briefly about that later in the night.

In the few minutes I have left before we go to the next item of business, I want to cover some of the things that were said by the minister in his response to the motion. The member for Hinchinbrook, in moving that motion, put forward a date of 1 April for deferring that bill. That date was used because

that is what is on the government's website for the finalisation date of the EIS for the Cairns Shipping Development Project. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to the minister, that is where that date came from, so that is not a very constructive argument at all. The argument about having to delay the port master planning is just rubbish really. At the end of the day, there is nothing to stop any of these ports from moving forward with their master planning. Nothing stops them at all. They could have got on quite well with that.

The argument from the Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef is that we are protecting the Great Barrier Reef with all of this legislation, but just yesterday we had the minister for ports in here telling us about the massive expansion in Townsville. So on one hand members of the Labor Party are very concerned about the reef, but in certain circumstances that all goes completely out the window because it is okay to massively expand one port that is right in the middle of all of that. I really think it is a little bit hypocritical to put those particular arguments up.

Resumed 12 November (see p. 2850)

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (11.52 am), continuing: It is a pleasure to recommence my speech from last night. I was talking about the hypocrisy of the Labor Party for voting down the deferral motion moved by the member for Hinchinbrook. It was interesting last night that during his contribution on the motion the minister said it was very important that we continue with the debate to finalise the bill last night. In fact, he said—

... I argue strongly that this bill should proceed today and not be deferred to a later date ...

Immediately after that the bill was deferred because the minister or somebody had something more important to do. One minute the reef is very important to the Labor Party and the next minute it is tossed in the long grass and we are back debating it again today.

As I said last night, this government is very hypocritical. It talks about how important the reef is. It has introduced this bill, which is basically a copy of the 2014 LNP bill with a couple of things deleted, but it stood in here a couple of days ago and talked about the massive expansion it wants to see happen at the port of Townsville. You would tend to think, if all those stories are true, that expansion will do some sort damage to the reef, but the government does not seem to worry about that so we will just get on with it, apparently.

The committee found on its travels around Queensland that the port of Cairns is a real concern to the people of Cairns. They really want to see the port expanded up there and for it to be a priority port. That is why it flowed through to the recommendations made by the committee. Why do the people of Cairns want to see the Cairns port expanded? Because it is the lifeblood of Cairns. The people who spoke to our committee talked about the shipping activity that happens there.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr HART: I hear the member for Mulgrave interjecting under his breath. I want to go back to something that the member for Barron River said last night. In his contribution to the motion he said that the Cairns development project was very important to the Labor Party and had the full backing of the Labor Party. How surprising is that when we see that the member for Mulgrave, who is next door, removed the funding for that project. You would tend to think that, if the government really supported the Cairns development project, it would have kept the funding there instead of taking it out of the budget, but that is what the member for Mulgrave did. He took the money away. The member for Barron River should be aware that his government really does not support the Cairns redevelopment project, but the people of Cairns do. The people of Cairns want to see the port expanded. This notion that an allowance of 50,000 cubic metres per project is going to help or 150,000 cubic metres over four years is going to help is absolute nonsense.

I was interested to hear the member for Mirani talking about Port Alma. I think it would be really good for Port Alma to have an allowance of 50,000 per project for capital dredging or 150,000 over four years, because I think Port Alma could really benefit from it. It is really important that the minister answer the question posed by the member for Hinchinbrook. Why is it okay for the port of Cairns to have an extra allowance of 50,000 cubic metres or 150,000 over four years? Why is it not possible for every other port in Queensland that is very close to the World Heritage area to have exactly the same?

While I am on the subject of 50,000, it is important to put that into the context of what was going to happen with the Cairns Shipping Development Project. The Cairns Shipping Development Project is looking at widening the shipping channel into Cairns. Its proposal is to widen, deepen and lengthen the existing outer shipping channel. The current width of 90 metres is proposed to be widened to 130 metres. The declared depth would go from 8.3 metres to 9.4 metres. That requires 4.4 million in situ cubic metres of capital dredging. 150,000 is just not going to cut it. It is nowhere near enough to keep this port active.

The people of Cairns want to see the port active because the port is used for a lot of things. When we were in Cairns we heard that all of the fuel for Cairns comes into the port, and at the moment those ships cannot make it in except on high tide. They are bringing in fuel for the airport. Imagine if those tankers could no longer get in because of the problems with the port. There could be issues with the fuel supply at the airport. There could also be problems with the fuel supply for our navy. They are just a couple of things that the people of Cairns are really concerned about. During our hearing up there we had numerous people talk to us about those issues.

We heard that Cairns has been progressively expanded over the years. Mr Vico, the general manager of planning and infrastructure from Ports North, told us that typically the history of Cairns channel has been one of expansion. The Cairns channel was expanded in the sixties from a width of 25 metres to 40 metres; in the early seventies from 45 to 60 metres; and in the early nineties from 60 to 75 metres, where it is now. It has been progressively expanded over the years.

If we do not allow for the Cairns Shipping Development Project to go ahead, which is what I am really concerned about, we are going to see Cairns eventually stifled when ships are no longer able to go in there. Cairns is represented by three Labor members at this time in this chamber and you would think they would be looking after the best interests of Cairns and they would be putting forward what is best for Cairns, but they are in fact not. We heard from three members of the Maritime Union of Australia while we were there—Mr Gallen, Mr O'Shane and Mr Rainbow.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr HART: Yes. They fully support the ongoing capital dredging of the port—

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr HART: I will just read what they said, member for Mulgrave, so you are across what the union up there thinks about your activities in this particular bill. I asked Mr Gallen—

Have you consulted with your local members of parliament? Have you given some feedback ...

His response to me was—

Exactly like you are saying, we do have an entry permit to a few of them.

That is, they have an entry permit to a few of the Labor members. He continued—

Curtis Pitt and his dad live up here and Pyne is just around the corner. We have not until now because this committee will be making the recommendations, but we will also be making recommendations to them plus the member for Cook plus the member for Barron River, Craig Crawford. We will be making strong recommendations.

I would have thought those union members would have been in since that date we were in Cairns and maybe they would have spoken to their local members and their local members would then be trying to do what is best for Cairns. But we saw the local members actually vote against what could have been very good for Cairns in this House last night. They are not standing up for the residents of Cairns, and that is why we need a member from Burleigh to stand up for the people of Cairns—because their members are not standing up for them. In fact, some of their members are even sponsoring petitions that call for the port of Cairns to not be dredged at all. That is the lengths they are going to because they are captured by their radical green mates. They are completely captured by them and they are not doing what is good for the people of Cairns.

We will be supporting this bill, as the member for Hinchinbrook said, because it is basically a copy of the 2014 bill that the member for Callide put forward. There are a few things I would have preferred to have seen in it. I would have preferred to have seen a review date that we had in our bill but it was removed by the Labor Party. Apart from that, I am supportive of the issues that this bill covers. I am interested to hear the contributions from the other Labor members who will stand up here and talk on this bill, but I am more interested to hear what those three local members have to say about it. If they were doing the right thing, they would have been standing up for the people of Cairns last night but they clearly were not.