




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (5.26 pm): I am delighted, as the member for Woodridge and the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, to make a contribution to the debate on the Plumbing and Drainage and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

This is a timely piece of legislation as I believe it will lead to the effective regulation of an important area of our economy and our community, being the construction industry, in particular plumbing. The construction industry has been a very important one to Queensland, especially as our population has grown quickly for most of the past 30 years. People have moved to Queensland, many from southern states, seeking a better life. How could you argue with them, Madam Deputy Speaker? Many people have come to Queensland from southern states and from overseas in recent years. I represent one of the most multicultural communities in Queensland, the Woodridge electorate. It has one of the largest numbers of refugees and migrants in Queensland. A very large proportion of my electorate is comprised of citizens who speak English as a second language. In some of our schools, up to 60 per cent of children speak English as a second language. People come to Queensland, to the city of Logan and to the electorate of Woodridge to start a new and better life, but that means people need housing and more houses need to be built. Of course, that supports a very strong housing industry in Queensland. It is a very important part of our economy.

One of the reasons people have wanted to move to Queensland is that they can live a wonderful life in a state known for its wonderful climate. Part of living well is that you can get a house relatively cheaply in Queensland, especially when compared with housing prices in Sydney and Melbourne. Queensland has developed a good reputation over the years as a place where you can have confidence in the house you buy. Successive Labor governments have ensured a very strong and important regulatory framework, not just for consumers but also for those in the construction industry.

One of the reasons people can have confidence in the home they buy in Queensland is that the industry is well regulated, as I have said. For years there have been clear lines of accountability where everyone—builders, plumbers and house buyers—knew where they stood. Regrettably, though, when the Liberal National Party came to office they proceeded with their characteristic approach of changing something for the purpose of changing it. In so many areas in Queensland in the three years from 2012 to 2015 we saw the LNP turn on its head the old saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. As they saw it, 'if it ain't broke, fix it'.

The LNP members worked on the principle of changing everything simply because Labor had done it and, if Labor had done it, then it had to be wrong. The Liberal National Party thought it knew better. In January last year the people of Queensland showed the LNP what they thought of that attitude. They made it clear to the LNP that that approach of throwing out things because they were Labor initiatives was not something—

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Members, your interjections are not being taken.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not mean to deliberately provoke the member for Nanango, but the truth needs to be told. I acknowledge that, in 2012, the people of Queensland voted for a change of government, but they did not vote for upending absolutely everything that had been in place beforehand.

When the LNP was in office we saw the abolition of the Plumbing Industry Council and the centralisation of most of the regulations covering plumbers under one state body, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. It was a catch-all arrangement in which all building functions were centralised. As was the standard form with the LNP, it was an arrangement that no-one really liked—not the plumbers, not the broader building industry, not the consumers.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is about standing up for working people and standing up for consumers. This legislation will give better protection to consumers. It is also better for the industry. Under this bill, the Service Trades Council will be part of the QBCC—an appropriate entity to regulate this industry. I believe that, in many ways, this arrangement may very well be the best of both worlds: the industry will have a voice but will also have the benefits of a one-stop shop operating under the umbrella of the QBCC.

We want to get the regulatory framework for the industry right. The rate of growth in Queensland may have slowed, but there is still a strong story of growth. Queensland's population is now just under 4.9 million. In five years time—in 2012—it will be 5.3 million. In another five years after that—in 2026—it will be 5.7 million. Five years after that—in 2031—it will be 6.1 million people. That is future growth but, under the Palaszczuk government, the building industry has rallied. Under the Palaszczuk Labor government, over the 12 months to the end of January this year, nearly 48,000 new homes, worth a total of \$13.7 billion, were approved. That is over 6,500 more homes—about \$2.1 billion—than were approved in the final 12 months of the previous LNP government. That is a very significant increase—6,500 more homes over the 12-month period of the first year of our government compared to the last year of the LNP government. Those people who decry economic growth and the strong policy measures that we have in place, in particular the LNP members, should recognise that the policy settings that we have put in place have stimulated growth in the construction industry.

In addition, in the first 12 months of the Palaszczuk Labor government, there has been almost 3,000 more housing finance commitments for owner occupation than there were in the final 12 months of the Newman government—a 2.5 per cent increase. Over the year to the December quarter 2015, construction work on new houses was up almost 23 per cent. Also in 2015, there was a 53.6 per cent increase in investor finance commitments for the construction of new housing.

We want to keep that momentum going. This change will give certainty to the industry and that certainty will lead to confidence. In turn, that will lead to more jobs. This morning, we heard some terrific news from the Treasurer in relation to employment growth in Queensland—

Mr de Brenni interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection. It is a positive thing that we should all be grateful for in Queensland. When it comes to public administration and jobs growth in Queensland, we are heading in the right direction. As a government, we are about giving certainty and confidence to the Queensland community. That will lead to more jobs.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the formulation of this bill. I want to thank the previous minister for housing and public works, the member for Algester—one of my Logan colleagues. Although not all of her electorate is in Logan, part of it is. I also thank the current Minister for Housing and Public Works, the member for Springwood. I thank him for the enthusiastic way in which he has engaged in his new ministerial responsibilities. It is terrific to work with the member for Springwood as one of the Labor members representing the city of Logan. He has brought that dedication that he applies to representing his community of Springwood to the cabinet. The member for Algester and the member for Springwood are new members of parliament and both are making terrific contributions as ministers in the Palaszczuk Labor government.

There are other aspects of this bill that are very worthy of mention, including the reforms to tenancy databases and others. As a member who has a very large public housing aspect to his constituency, I support those amendments. I know that they will strengthen the framework for residents in my community. They are a very positive thing for the electorate of Woodridge. I commend the bill to the parliament.