




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PLANNING BILLS (COGNATE DEBATE)

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (9.47 pm): My contribution to the planning bills will be very short. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the chair, Jim Pearce, the member for Mirani; Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh—and I wish him all the best in his new role as shadow minister—Brittany Lauga, the member for Keppel; Joan Pease, the member for Lytton; and Shane Knuth, the member for Dalrymple who are on the committee. I would like to acknowledge Glenn Butcher, the member for Gladstone, who was on the committee. This is obviously my last opportunity to speak on these issues as a member of the committee, because I have moved to the Finance and Administration Committee. I am looking forward to working with the members on that committee, and it is a great opportunity for me to look at some different issues.

I would also like to pay tribute and thank the administration for the support that we received on the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Jacqui Dewar, the research director; Margaret Telford, principal research officer; Mary Westcott, principal research officer; Marion O'Connor; Dianne Christian, executive assistant; and Erin Pasley, who used to be our research director and who is here tonight. I do acknowledge her and thank her for all the patience she has had with new members of parliament getting used to what the committee system is all about.

I know that a significant amount of effort and work has been put into these bills. The very fact that we are debating these bills here today can be directly attributed to the work of the member for Callide, who was the previous planning minister. We have to acknowledge that back in 2012 when the member for Callide became the planning minister he walked into this portfolio and found what we could probably say was a bit of a mess. It was planning which was arduous, it was all over the place and it was stifling opportunities, development and jobs.

I acknowledge the member for Callide, the former minister for planning, for being prepared to take this forward to make sure we have a planning system that is going to work in Queensland, that is going to create jobs and that simplifies matters to ensure development opportunities and job creation opportunities are not missed. I also acknowledge the involvement of the member for Southport in this process. He should be acknowledged as a person who really got into it and made sure we progressed some way of going forward.

This all started back in 2012. As members know, we needed reform. The Sustainable Planning Act was overregulated, with a planning system that stifled development instead of stimulating it. Planning was seen as a critically important issue for industry groups and everybody across Queensland. That is why the LNP opposition undertook the work to get the reform process started again, by introducing a suite of private members' bills in June last year. On top of this mountain of work, I acknowledge that the Deputy Premier and the Labor government had started their own process of consultation. This culminated in a package of planning bills being introduced by the Deputy Premier in November last year. That is when the committee process began and where the committee members came in.

The bills seek to replace the current planning legislation by creating new framework legislation. Basically, the rights, roles and responsibilities are embedded in legislation, which is subjected to parliamentary scrutiny. Some stakeholders had the view that, instead of overhauling the system by implementing new legislation, reform could be achieved through a structural review of the existing legislation. However, the LNP opposition supports the view of the department that there are a range of factors to be addressed and that, if all of the elements were to be done by an amendment to the Sustainable Planning Act, any amending act would be long and complicated, with many of the foundational elements of the SPA remaining the same.

The objective of the bill is to deliver better planning for Queensland by enabling better strategic planning and high-quality development outcomes; ensuring effective public participation and engagement in the planning framework; creating an open, transparent and accountable planning system that delivers investment and community confidence; creating legislation that has a practical structure and clearly expresses how land use planning and development assessment will be done in Queensland; and supporting local governments to adapt to and adopt the changes.

Through the committee process concerns were raised around transition arrangements, both the time frames and the cost to councils for transitioning to the new system. That was something I took a lot of notice of, because there are a lot of bush and regional councils that will have to adapt to this new planning process. They do not have a lot of funds as their rates base is very small. They rely on federal and state funding as funds are very scarce. The LNP opposition understands the concerns of councils, particularly small councils, who are worried about the cost of these changes. That is why we have always showed our support for the funding identified in last year's state budget of around \$60 million to support the transition.

It is also intended that the bill will commence no less than 12 months from assent to provide time for local governments to examine and update their schemes and adapt their development assessment systems. This is important because small bush councils have to have the ability to adopt and transition to the new planning regime. They need time and support. I suspect that the government understands—the opposition certainly understands—that these councils need every assistance. I think especially of the small councils such as those in the electorate of Gregory: Barcoo, Barcaldine, Longreach, Quilpie, Woorabinda and Central Highlands. Those councils do not have a large rates base. They have limited funds and they need the opportunity to implement these changes.

I thank those councils from all over Queensland which submitted to the committee and participated in those regional meetings. We saw councils from all over Queensland. I certainly appreciate the way they were willing to come forward and help us understand where they were coming from and guide us in making sure we get this right for all councils across Queensland.

I pay tribute to the shadow minister, a person who is well known and well acknowledged as someone with great understanding of planning laws. He certainly plays a significant role in making sure we get this right. I also commend the member for Clayfield, who was the shadow planning minister and is now the Leader of the Opposition, for putting through those bills. I certainly enjoyed my time on the committee. I look forward to working with the new committee and look forward to seeing these bills passed.