




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (5.45 pm): I rise today to support the bill before the House, the Plumbing and Drainage and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The importance of plumbing and drainage in our modern society can be traced back as far as ancient Rome where we saw the introduction of expansive systems of aqueducts and tiled wastewater removal.

An honourable member: 'What have the Romans ever done for us?'

Mr STEWART: The aqueducts, roads.

An honourable member: Numerals.

Mr STEWART: Numerals as well. For those who have visited modern-day Rome, evidence of these amazing aqueducts that were built around about 2,000 years ago to carry fresh water across wide expanses of land to a large civilisation can still be seen today. Likewise, in ancient Roman times there was widespread use of lead pipes. These too can be seen when visiting Pompeii, that ancient city that was buried under the ash of the erupting volcano and therefore snap capturing and preserving the life and times of an ancient world. It is interesting to note that recent studies have shown that the people of Pompeii suffered from lead poisoning and it was, in fact, the cause of many deaths at the time.

With the fall of Rome both water supply and sanitation stagnated or regressed for well over 1,000 years. Improvement was very slow, with very little effective progress made until the growth of modern densely populated cities in the 1800s. It was really during the industrialisation period of Europe that we saw the necessity to progress our plumbing and drainage systems in cities such as London and Paris. During this period, public health authorities began pressing for better waste disposal systems to be installed to prevent or control epidemics of disease. Earlier waste disposal systems had merely consisted of collecting waste and dumping it on the ground or into the river. Often the emptying of raw sewage into the river systems contaminated water downstream resulting in disease and illness to those communities. Perhaps it was better to live upstream in those times. Undeterred, society progressed and evolved and eventually the development of separate underground water and sewerage systems eliminated open sewage ditches and cesspools.

Our plumbing and drainage systems and laws have progressed a long way since those days of open aqueducts and sewage ditches. As a result, modern-day society enjoys the benefits of being able to turn on a tap and have fresh, clean water at any time. It is a luxury that, as we have heard from the member for Everton, we quite often take for granted. In North Queensland we sometimes curse during the hot summer months as we incur almost first degree burns by turning on the cold water tap to wash our hands. This is due to the copper pipes running through the roof cavity in the ceiling and being naturally heated. While I am talking about North Queensland, I am a proud North Queensland boy born in Home Hill and even in my time we did not have the flush toilets like they had down in Brisbane. We had the old thunderbox out the back.

Mrs Frecklington: You are showing your age now.

Mr STEWART: I am showing my age. At night-time you had to walk down the back carrying a hurricane lantern and visit the toilet. During the day, however, you had to time your run to make sure that you went to the toilet either before or after the change of the bucket underneath. There was nothing worse than using the thunderbox and then having the pan ripped out from underneath you and a new one put in. It was very embarrassing. He certainly was not the most popular man around town.

The objectives of the bill are to amend the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 and the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991 to establish a dedicated plumbing industry regulatory body to be called the Service Trades Council within the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. The bill delivers the Queensland government's election commitment to re-establish a dedicated plumbing industry regulatory body within the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. As the former minister pointed out in her introductory speech, to maintain public health and the environment we must have a strong plumbing industry. This government understands the benefits of a strong industry with the best possible standards. The government is committed to working with and not against Queensland's plumbing industry. The government wishes to ensure that the concerns of the plumbing industry are taken seriously. The government has listened to those concerns and consulted with industry stakeholders on this matter.

The bill proposes to amend the Plumbing and Drainage Act and the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act to establish the Service Trades Council as part of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, provide for its functions and powers and set out how the council is to operate. The council will replace the former Plumbing Industry Council, which was abolished on 10 November 2014. The former council oversaw the licensing and conduct of plumbers and drainers in Queensland. After the former council was disbanded, its functions were transferred to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, following the former Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee report No. 14, *Inquiry into the operation and performance of the Queensland Building Services Authority*.

The Service Trades Council will have a number of critical roles in its representation of the plumbing industry. Those include conferring on national policy development—for example, licensing, discipline and other related matters—and reporting to the minister on issues related to plumbing and drainage. The Service Trades Council will also be able to make recommendations to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission about the performance of any of the commission's functions under the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002. Various submitters indicated their support for reinstating a plumbing industry regulatory body. However, some suggestions were submitted in relation to aspects of clause 7 of the bill, which deals with the proposed establishment, functions and powers of the council.

The council's key functions will be to confer on national policy development and implementation for the plumbing and drainage trade, reporting to the Minister for Housing and Public Works on any issues related to trade referred to it by the minister and any other issue that the council considers the minister should know about; to make recommendations to the Queensland Building and Construction Commissioner about the performance of the commission's functions under the Plumbing and Drainage Act; to establish a panel for the council to assist the Queensland Building and Construction Commission in performing its functions in relation to licensing for the trade; and to undertake internal reviews of decisions made by the commission in relation to disciplinary matters involving plumbers and drainers.

We have learnt from our humble beginnings. When we look at our humble beginnings of lead pipes and open sewage pits, captured for all time at Pompeii, it allows us to look at where we are now and where we need to progress to, given ever-changing technology, evolving building practices and our developing trades. The public needs to be aware of and protected against specific bacteria that live in our modern-day plumbing. As the honourable member for Ferny Grove has outlined this afternoon, it is necessary that we have working in our communities licensed plumbers who know what they are doing to prevent those diseases. We do not want the dodgy brothers carrying out plumbing works in our towns and cities. These changes are important for respecting the voice of the plumbing industry. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.