




Speech By  
**Tim Mander**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

---

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

**PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (5.06 pm): I also rise to speak on the Plumbing and Drainage and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I am going to limit my comments to the Service Trades Council because, as we have already stated tonight and today, we will not be opposing the bill. However, I do disagree with it because when I was the minister for housing and public works we undertook one of the most significant reviews of the regulation of the building and construction industry. There were many, many problems with the old BSA. So the first thing we did was we brought about a parliamentary inquiry which made sure that people from industry and consumers could come along and talk about their experience with the BSA. After that particular parliamentary inquiry we also conducted an independent review and a whole range of consultation happened across the sector. It put us in a position to be able to bring about what we commonly called a 10-point action plan to change the way that the regulation took place in the old BSA.

The first thing we did was create the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. We actually put in place a board that had some authority. The old BSA board was simply an advisory board. We wanted to make sure that the new building regulator could be in control of its own destiny and make sure that both consumers and contractors had some confidence going forward. This was well received right across the sector by consumers and contractors, and some fabulous reforms have taken place. One such reform was the rapid dispute adjudication service. We managed to bring disputes to resolution far quicker than had happened in the past, saving an enormous amount of frustration and anxiety for consumers and saving a lot of money as well. We looked at a review of the private certifiers, and I am really keen to see how that continues under this government. We also looked at the licensing and compliance systems. Of course what is relevant to this particular bill tonight is that we looked at the licensing role of the QBCC to make sure that it included as many licensed tradespersons as possible, including plumbers.

I am a great supporter of the plumbing industry and, like the member for Whitsunday, do not take it for granted and appreciate when we turn a tap on we have clean water. That is something that many countries around the world do not experience, and we should never take it for granted. I have a great relationship with the Master Plumbers' Association, with Penny Cornah and Kelvin Slade, and of course the doyenne of the plumbing industry, Mr Bill Watson. We had many conversations about this change. Yes, they would have preferred the PIC stay the way it was, but they agreed that this was a good way to go. They wanted to give the model a chance to operate, and they were still going to have an opportunity to be involved in an advisory capacity through the QBCC advisory board that we were putting together.

What is very important to realise is that in no way did any of these changes lessen the standards that we would apply to plumbers. All of those things were taken into account, and of course that was incredibly important. We wanted to make it easier for consumers and contractors to have a one-stop shop so that, rather than trying to negotiate through quite a few different organisations, there was no

confusion about where people went to get a licence or where they went when they had a complaint about plumbing. We were also looking at cost savings for plumbers. Under the old system they had to get an occupational licence with the PIC and a contractor's licence with the old BSA. By putting it under the same umbrella, with the QBCC, plumbers were saving around \$130 a year, and they welcomed that very much. We were trying to achieve a one-stop shop, streamline red tape and administration, and at the same time maintain the standards that are absolutely necessary for those who work in the plumbing industry.

What changes has the government brought about and are they going to cause an unnecessary level of red tape? There is another layer of administration which is totally unnecessary, and of course it is going to cost money. It will cost \$59,000 to establish the Service Trades Council, and it will cost at least another \$400,000 per year on an ongoing basis. That is money which could be spent elsewhere to improve standards and ensure that we have a great service for contractors and consumers. This cost will eventually inevitably be passed on in licensing fees. There is no doubt about that whatsoever.

I draw the minister's attention to the fact that the QBCC has not had a permanent head for eight months. I mean no disrespect to anybody who is acting in that role, but when we have an organisation that is going through a reform process and it does not have a champion—somebody on the board who is trying to bring about these reforms, has a vision and has been appointed to the board on a full-time basis—they are going to find it very difficult to bring about that implementation. I know there are people in the industry now who are frustrated and they feel that the momentum has stopped.

I believe if we had a commissioner there—and I understand that he had personal reasons for leaving—the Master Plumbers' Association would have been confident that the proposals that we had in place would have achieved our goals. Without a permanent commissioner it is very difficult for people in the industry to have confidence that their voice will be heard. I call on the minister to please look at this appointment. It is important that we have a permanent head there as quickly as possible so that the reforms that we undertook can be carried out with the speed that they deserve and so that we can give confidence to contractors and consumers.