Speech By

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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs LAUGA (Keppel—ALP) (3.44 pm): I find it absolutely astounding that the member for Maroochydore rose in this place today to talk about this government not investing in infrastructure. In terms of those opposite, just ask Mayor Margaret Strelow about the zero dollars Rockhampton Regional Council received through the LNP's Royalties for the Regions program. Should I call it perhaps the LNP's slush fund? Zero dollars were invested in the Rockhampton Regional Council through Royalties for the Regions in the entirety of the LNP's term in government. We on this side of the House are invested in building infrastructure in Queensland, and we put our money where our mouth is.

I should also turn to the contribution of the member for Glass House. I am reminded of his own goal a few weeks ago when he moved a disallowance motion about the Oxley PDA, a motion that was a spectacular and transparent attack by the LNP on a first-term Labor member, my good friend the member for Mount Ommaney. The member for Glass House—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member for Keppel, I am finding it hard to relate your current comments to the long title of the bill. Could we try to bring it back in some manner to the long title of the bill, please?

Mrs LAUGA: I am referring, of course, to the spectacular and transparent attack that occurred as a result of a PDA proposal in the member for Mount Ommaney's electorate. Of course, we are here talking about priority development areas. In this particular PDA there was an incredibly dodgy online petition that extraordinarily underestimated the hard work of the member for Mount Ommaney, Jess Pugh, and so many in her community. The Mount Ommaney community has put him well and truly in his place.

The Planning Act 2016, which commenced on 3 July 2017, provides a framework for land use, planning and development assessment across the state. This framework balances economic development, the environment and the wellbeing of our communities in an effective, efficient and transparent way. The Planning Act has been in place for some 18 months now and stakeholders have identified operational matters which the bill proposes to address. As a proud member of the Planning Institute of Australia, I have had a number of colleagues in the PIA raise these operational matters with me as well. I am pleased that today we are addressing a number of those operational matters and fixing the bill. The government has listened to what industry, councils and the community have to say, and this bill demonstrates this government's commitment to continuous improvement of the planning framework. Planning frameworks, we know from experience, do need continuous improvement because things are ever changing. Technology plays an integral role in our planning system. As technology improves, so too do we need to continuously improve our planning framework.

A key concern raised by stakeholders is the current requirement whereby a submitter who chooses to appeal a development decision must notify every other submitter in the appeal. In practice there can be hundreds, if not thousands, of submitters with respect to an application, so the requirement for the submitter appellant to notify every other submitter is causing uncertainty and delays in court

proceedings. The bill removes this requirement and in doing so removes the unnecessary administrative burden and also the cost on submitter appellants during the appeals process. The bill does not change any rights to initiate an appeal or join an appeal in the Planning and Environment Court. Similarly, this government recognises the importance of ensuring legislation enables the appropriate use of technology as expected in contemporary business practices.

The bill provides that, as part of an exchange of documents between two parties under the Planning Act, information and documents can be viewed and downloaded electronically. For example, a council may receive thousands of submissions in response to a development application. The amendment in the bill would allow the council to save time and money by providing this information online instead of potentially sending reams of paper to each submitter. It is just crazy that that would need to happen, so this bill fixes these provisions and essentially says that the submitter would still be informed about council's decision and have access to relevant documentation. If a submitter prefers to receive a card copy of the documentation, a request can of course be made to the council.

Finally, the bill addresses uncertainty about the infrastructure charges framework by responding to recent concerns about the validity of certain infrastructure charges notices. Infrastructure charges are used by councils to contribute to new and upgraded essential infrastructure required to service our growing towns and neighbourhoods. It is routine for councils to issue infrastructure charges notices to developers if the development is a type that incurs a charge under council's publicly available infrastructure charges resolution.

To levy a charge the council must give an infrastructure charges notice to the applicant. Information regarding levied charges are publicly available in a council's infrastructure charges register. Infrastructure charges are not calculated on the whim of council. The Planning Act clearly sets out the specific methods for calculating charges and any related offsets and refunds. The Planning Act also provides the ability to seek a negotiated infrastructure charges notice and dispute resolution processes. The proposed amendment to the Planning Act will validate infrastructure charges notices issued under the former Sustainable Planning Act 2019, but only to the extent the notice did not provide reasons.

Communities need to be assured that the essential infrastructure they expect is delivered. Communities also need to be assured that their rates are not being used by councils to defend court actions by developers seeking to have their charges notices declared invalid or recoup charges already paid. It is important to recognise this amendment has the broad support of councils, developers and other industry stakeholders, like the Planning Institute of Australia. I commend the bill to the House.