




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 14 May 2019

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.09 pm): I rise as a member of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee to address some key aspects of the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. First, I want to once again place on record my thanks to the secretariat. I never cease to be amazed at the tireless efforts of our secretariat. They really do an outstanding job. Jacqueline Dewar has been at the helm for quite some time. A number of assistants have come through. She does an exemplary job of calling up excellent witnesses to ensure that we get the best possible testimony on all of our different inquiries. It would be absolutely remiss of me not to start by thanking them, as I know each of my fellow committee members have.

Turning to the bill, CleanCo was established on 17 December 2018. It is a publicly owned clean energy generator under the Palaszczuk government's Powering Queensland Plan. This bill further supports the establishment of CleanCo. The changes in this bill will align CleanCo's operating environment with that of Queensland's other government owned energy generators and it will protect its competitive interest in the National Electricity Market. The changes to the Electricity Act will enable CleanCo to be designated as a state electricity entity to ensure that it is subject to government directions and provides legislative protection of employee entitlements. These protections include employees transferred to CleanCo retaining their existing entitlements. New CleanCo staff will share those same rights.

CleanCo will deliver on the government's objectives of a clean energy future, affordable energy prices right across Queensland and growing investment in jobs in this sector. The Palaszczuk government's Powering Queensland Plan actions have been very successful in putting downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices and, therefore, on the household budget. Just a few weeks ago I spoke in the Mount Ommaney community on the success of this plan. It is because the Palaszczuk government owns the electricity generators that it can take action to deliver affordable and reliable electricity while lowering energy sector emissions to the benefit of all Queenslanders.

The Treasurer has previously indicated that CleanCo should reduce wholesale electricity prices on average by around \$7 per megawatt hour, which is expected to translate to an estimated \$70 per annum saving for the average Queensland household. That is great news for households like mine. CleanCo is also a key part of the Palaszczuk government's broader strategy to achieve our goal of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. It will provide support for the establishment of 1,000 megawatts of renewables such as solar, wind and hydro by 2025. The government will provide an initial injection of \$250 million for CleanCo to progress the development of new, publicly owned generation assets.

I would also like to touch on the water authority board amendments. As we know, this bill amends the Water Act to modernise governance arrangements of category 2 water authorities and facilitate balanced gender representation on these boards. The key word is 'balanced'. The amendments set out specific criteria that must be considered during the selection process for suitable candidates for the director of the board. These requirements include having appropriate skills, knowledge and experience and having regard for balanced gender representation. This approach will bring category 2 water

authorities in line with other governance models for statutory board processes in Queensland. A merit based approach will allow flexibility in the selection process, as both election and nomination processes can be used to recommend a person for director. The bill removes the ability of a director to continue to hold office until a successor is appointed despite the end of their term. However, while the selection process is underway an acting director may be appointed.

With that process clearly outlined, what a shame it was to hear the member for Burdekin call this policy a Brisbane takeover. Let us be frank, those on the opposite side of the House have a horrific track record on gender equity. It seems that they fundamentally oppose it. To be so dismissive of the need to have gender equity yet again is outdated in our modern workplace. If the members opposite oppose gender quotas that is fine, but do not dress it up as some kind of city versus country issue—they need to own it. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that we have equal representation of women on government boards. This is a big step in the right direction.

The Land Act 1994 will be amended to provide processes to resolve disputes involving lessees and sublessees on state land. While these are infrequent, disputes do arise from time to time between the sublessor and the sublessee in relation to the terms and conditions of a sublease. This bill establishes an improved dispute resolution framework for disputing parties to resolve their differences, either through mediation or arbitration. Under the framework, parties are encouraged to attempt to resolve their dispute through mediation as a first step. There are also situations where multiple subleases may be connected through a common sublessor, the holder of the primary lease. The new framework is able to respond to these situations whereby multiple disputes about similar sublease issues can be resolved as part of the same dispute resolution process. This is a positive step towards achieving cost-effective outcomes for parties involved in such disputes.

I would also like to place on record my thanks to the Queensland Law Society for its contributions through our committee hearings. Its representatives did a wonderful job in providing evidence around this bill. It is always very much appreciated to have their input. If I can move on to another Land Act amendment, we have seen some real confected hysteria from those opposite on some of these changes. I sat through the committee hearings and I listened to the department representatives, indeed all the witnesses, very closely. Let us clear up a couple of myths that have been perpetuated by those opposite. These powers are intended to be used as a last resort when there is no safe alternative pathway for access. The new powers include numerous safeguards to balance—there is that word again—the rights and interests of landowners with the department's obligation to effectively administer and manage state land. These include adequate prior notice being given for any proposed entry, including the details of its purpose, the duration and any equipment that might need to be taken across the land, authorised officers needing to take all reasonable steps to minimise damage and inconvenience during that entry, including complying with all relevant biosecurity requirements and entry of any residential or associated buildings not being permitted and landowners can enter into a remediation agreement with the department if damage occurs as a result of the entry. Those opposite can come into this chamber and debate the merits of the legislation, but they should at least stick to the facts. I commend the bill to the House.