




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 2 April 2019

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (3.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Economic Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. The bill proposes several amendments to the Building Queensland Act 2015 to improve the operation of Building Queensland, which is an independent statutory authority. Through its act, Building Queensland is responsible for preparing robust business cases to inform investment decisions and for developing a pipeline of infrastructure proposals that it considers to be priorities for the state. In delivering on those responsibilities, Building Queensland works with Queensland government agencies, government owned corporations and nominated statutory authorities. Building Queensland was established as a statutory body in 2015. As with many newly established bodies, the government decided that there should be a review of Building Queensland's operations after 12 months to ensure that it was being effective.

A national infrastructure advisory firm, E3 Advisory, was appointed to conduct the review and the report was completed in May 2017. The review considered Building Queensland's functions and activities, its compliance with legislative requirements and its governance arrangements. The review report stated that Building Queensland has been effective and that improvements could be made. The findings suggested a more strategic approach to deciding which business cases are led by Building Queensland. The findings also recommended the frequency of full updates to the Infrastructure Pipeline Report. Other recommendations included operational matters, such as board proxies.

The report and recommendations were carefully considered by the government and Building Queensland, including the Building Queensland board. On 6 August 2018, the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning published both the report and the Queensland government's response to the report's recommendations on its website. All eight recommendations are supported or supported in principle. Most of the recommendations have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. The amendments to the Building Queensland Act in this bill are primarily to implement the outcomes of the review.

The first amendment changes the thresholds determining which business cases are led by Building Queensland through removing high-cost but low-risk road infrastructure proposals. In practice, this will mean some road transport projects will be led by the Department of Transport and Main Roads instead of Building Queensland. Road transport infrastructure projects frequently have a high capital cost even when the business case has a low risk and less complexity. Excluding road transport projects up to a higher threshold of \$500 million from Building Queensland's lead role would mean that, for example, several projects which are part of the Bruce Highway Upgrade Program would fall into Building Queensland's assist role instead. If the business case is considered complicated, it can still be led by Building Queensland. The minister responsible for the Building Queensland Act still has the power to issue a direction to Building Queensland which requires them to lead the preparation of a business case for a particular infrastructure proposal.

The second amendment to the Building Queensland Act proposes to change the frequency of the report's publication from bi-annual to annual. This aligns it with the state budget process and ensures the report captures budget announcements. Currently, the administrative effort for both Building Queensland and delivery agencies to develop a full update to the Infrastructure Pipeline Report every six months is significant.

The third amendment is regarding government board members who are members by virtue of their position within the government. This amendment makes it clear that any nomination of a proxy does not need to be a permanent nomination and the government board member may nominate the proxy for any period of time, including a single meeting. A further complementary amendment steps up the monetary value for the business case thresholds so that they increase by 10 per cent every five years. While it was not a recommendation of the E3 Advisory report, this will ensure that the monetary values keep pace with the producer price indexes for building roads and bridges in Queensland and for other heavy and civil engineering construction in Australia. The amendments proposed to the Building Queensland Act will assist Building Queensland to continue to develop robust business cases and provide a high level of independent advice to government.

I make reference to comments made by the member for Glass House in relation to the youth foyer in Aitkenvale. I can assure the member that the member for Mundingburra has met with neighbours and listened to every single one of them and did not leave until she had spoken with everyone and heard each of their concerns. Targeted consultation programs started on 12 March. There was a four-week consultation program to hear directly from residents. There have been 161 visits to the community engagement website. Fifteen people have directly contacted the project team for an appointment. There have been 359 petition letters sent. Forty-two neighbours did not sign the petition. Two hundred and forty-one petitioners were from the local area, 73 were from neighbouring suburbs and 200 were from broader Townsville regions. The consultation and engagement website has been open for two weeks and I encourage anyone in the Townsville area who might be concerned about this to register for a face-to-face meeting with the project team. They can do that through www.yoursayhpw.engagementhq.com/townsville-youth-foyer.

The member for Glass House comes into this House and makes some really bold statements about the Palaszczuk government not listening when, in fact, we do the absolute opposite: we listen to the people of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.