




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 2 April 2019

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.50 pm): I rise to speak on the Economic Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. I want to address some serious concerns we in the electorate of Burnett have, especially around economic development or should I say the lack thereof. Firstly, I refer to the government's political games being played around the Hinkler regional deal. Can members believe that after years of negotiation and consultation the state minister responsible did not even turn up to the signing. It was at around the same time as the city deals were signed in Brisbane. This is an extraordinary example of political arrogance and contempt. City deals got signed in Brisbane, but there is nothing for the regions.

For years this project was discussed. Everyone knew the geographical area incorporated in the proposal and our communities understood that a quarter of a billion dollars was on the table for the region—an important economic driver—if all three levels of government worked together. Sadly, this Labor government stops at nothing to attempt to gain political favour and advantage at the expense of the people in our region.

I know the poor old member for the area is not in the chamber, but he got on board calling it a dud deal and saying he was left out. The member for Maryborough's electorate includes the areas of Burrum Heads, Toogoom, Howard, Torbanlea, Aldershot, Nikenbah, which are all within the regional deal geographic boundary. This regional deal that is not being supported by the member even has an extension of Urraween Road from where it stops currently. This is another project that would help the member for Maryborough's electorate. His electorate is being let down.

The Fraser Coast Regional Council has signed up and is working on the economic benefits that will benefit the entire region—the good people of Hervey Bay and Maryborough—but Labor would prefer to exploit their arrogance and majority in this place. The Bundaberg Regional Council has signed up and is getting on with the job. Let us not forget that this Labor government can pork-barrel the seat of Maryborough with hundreds of millions of dollars, but cannot step up with a \$200 million transformational project designed at regional development. Nasty political games are being played.

Let us talk about economic development in the region. Thank God for the federal coalition government. It is doing the heavy lifting with local government. There is \$19 million for Bundaberg Brewed Drinks to create an extra 200 jobs; \$4.68 million for Macadamias Australia for their processing plant and tourism expansion; \$7.4 million for IWC health service's new building providing capacity for all, including Indigenous Queenslanders; \$1.5 million for Austchilli for their new facility; \$3.75 million for stage 2 of the Mon Repos Turtle Centre; \$8 million this financial year for financial assistance grants; \$2.9 million for the Burnett Heads town centre redevelopment; \$6 million for the Pacific Tug marine industry precinct—this is another project that is being stalled by this government; people want to get on with the job in the state development area at the port, but nothing is happening—\$14.9 million for the roadworks at Apple Tree Creek; \$19 million for the Regional Growth Fund; \$23 million for the Building Better Regions Fund; \$9.65 million in regional jobs and investment; and \$2.5 million for Isis Central Sugar Mill's rail expansion.

There are many more projects that have resulted from the federal coalition's good advocacy and good government. I thank Keith Pitt for continuing to fight against the failures and funding shortfalls of the state Labor government. The minister has acknowledged that in the planning rules he has significant responsibilities, including the rarely used reserve call-in powers. This response is important to the future of my region. I would like to provide examples of the possible consequences if we get this wrong. If the minister's call-in determination is that the Jewel development should be constructed to no higher than five storeys, it will not go ahead.

Mr DICK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Burnett has had a pretty good go about matters, including the glorious reign of Keith Pitt. It has nothing to do with the long title of the bill. Now he is moving on to a call-in which is not relevant in any way, shape or form to the long title. I would ask you to refer him back to the long title.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member, I caution you to stay within the long title of the bill. You are straying, shall we say, upon the bounds of the common sense of the language.

Mr BENNETT: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am referring to the call-in powers because the minister administers the Planning Act. The local planning rules come under the Planning Act which is to be amended in the Economic Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

An opposition member: There's quite a few things.

Mr BENNETT: That is right. Omnibus bills give us a fair bit of latitude. Thank you for the interjection. I hope I am on safe ground talking about town planning issues and the act administered by the minister. I remind the House that issues around town planning and the rules around the minister's call-in powers could have a detrimental effect on my region. There are future opportunities for economic development at Burnett Heads, Moore Park Beach and Woodgate Beach. A current application before the council, which is affected by this bill, sees a five- to 10-storey development as an option. If there is a negative decision around the Jewel development we could see the Burnett Heads marina development project shelved and investors and developers go elsewhere. The project was repeatedly advised that there was no state interest. We ask for sensible consideration.

Our community has fought for decades for investment and opportunity that is now becoming a reality. This call-in decision is pivotal to our future. It is confusing to many to see such an opportunity being determined by an external influence when our elected council shares a vision and passion for planning and economic development.

In terms of the amendments to the planning scheme for Burnett Heads, we would remind the minister that in his role as the state planning minister that that town plan has been through seven years of consultation and we need progress. Talking about the Esplanade, the Jewel development and other tangible development opportunities leads me to state development areas, which are part of bill, and in particular the state development area for the Bundaberg port. The reason I raise this is that there has not been one sod turned over the years in this priority development area.

Mr DICK: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. There is nothing in the bill that is relevant to state development areas. This is just a tour of the globe by the member for Burnett. He is from a party that complains about not having enough time to talk about bills and does not talk about it. It is entirely irrelevant. I would ask you to refer the gentleman back to the long title of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Again, member, I do ask that you constrain your comments to the long title of the bill. The particular purposes are stated in the long title. Please constrain your language to that.

Mr BENNETT: In the development area not a sod has been turned. We now have a federal government putting in a conveyor. As per the state of the regions report, the Wide Bay is the most disadvantaged region in Australia. We ask for more assistance not hindrance from government at any level. I need to acknowledge the member for Toowoomba North who was desperate to talk on this bill and the Toowoomba rail yard project—

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, the member has the call.

Mr BENNETT: In conclusion, it is important that we talk about economic development and planning issues and the future of our great state. Quite frankly, the only one doing the heavy lifting in my electorate is the federal government and our local government.