




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 19 February 2020

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPIT MASTER PLAN BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (11.24 am): One of the questions that has been stimulated in me by the member for Glass House is their declaration of how they support this. Do they support this? Do they not? Do they support the process? I look forward to hearing from the Gold Coast members on the other side about whether they support this or not.

The member for Glass House said he will listen to us to see if he can learn something. I will be very happy to enlighten the member for Glass House and other members once we explain a bit about the bill, which they may not know too much about, and the process that we have gone through. For example, I mentioned the first commercial lease going up for sale. We found, from talking to the stakeholders, that all stakeholders are in support of that. Community, environmental, commercial leaseholders—they all agreed to this; they were waiting for this. Everyone was on board for this first lot going onto the market. I know that he said that the LNP members are invested in this. I point out that there is a whole range of stakeholders who have been invested in this for years and years. This government has listened to them. Some 23,000 individual pieces of feedback have been fed into this master plan. That is extraordinary.

In this debate the member talked a little bit about what is in the Spit Master Plan bill, but a much larger portion of the time he was whinging and whining. We implore members on the other side to speak to the bill. Do not use it as an opportunity to whinge and whine. Let us see you contribute to the process, like all the stakeholders around the Spit have done.

Firstly, I want to congratulate the minister and the department on what has been a highly consultative process, bringing about a very highly consultative master plan. As the minister said, 30 years of conflict have led to this. So many stakeholders wanted so much to happen on this particular bit of land. We have had extensive consultation that has led to this bill and this master plan. As I said, there were 23,000 individual pieces of feedback. That is extraordinary.

As the minister said in his speech yesterday, we have spent time to get this right. That is the crucial part: we have spent time to get this right. We have arrived at a situation where all parties are very much in agreement about what should happen. It is a fine thing to witness all stakeholders being furiously in agreement, especially over such a contested bit of land. I point out that the master plan has been recognised for excellence in public engagement. It has won a Planning Institute of Australia award for that engagement process. It has taken time and we have got it right.

Throughout this process and in the bill itself, our vision and achievement is very clear. As the minister has said previously, we have built consensus out of conflict in this process and in this master plan. The vision we brought forward is the vision shared by the community—a three-storey height limit and to preserve the open space in this area. We are preserving this open space for all of Queensland. In contrast, as the minister said, the LNP plan is for plenty of concrete, plenty of high towers and maybe a canal estate or two. As we heard last night from the LNP, if they were in control they would favour some stakeholders over everyone else. Our plan is all-embracing. We have a vision for all Queenslanders with this plan.

I will deal with some of the issues that have been raised in our report. I congratulate the minister for taking on the committee's suggestion to expand the skill set of the board because it is very clear the Gold Coast Waterways Authority will now be delivering so much more than they have previously. They will be overseeing works and planning that will include built form as well as natural areas. That takes a higher level of skill and a different skill set than we have seen on some boards recently. This particular issue was very important to the community and environmental stakeholders. They were very specific about it. We saw the sense in what they said. The fact that that has been accepted reflects the consensus approach the Palaszczuk government has brought to the master plan and the whole process.

One of the other issues we addressed was Curlew Island. I thank the minister for pointing out that action has already been taken in terms of surveying and registering this particular bit of land as a nature reserve. We saw this land when we went down to the Spit. It is a special area. Curlew Island has been created by natural forces over recent years. It is home to many birds and it is a roost site. It is also a recreation site. We heard from the Gold Coast Waterways Authority that people picnic, camp and bring their dogs to that area. It is an area of potential conflict. The feeling very much was that it be recognised as a nature reserve. It is great that that has been done.

The issue around helicopters was also brought up during our consultation. This is another vexing issue for the Waterways Authority and all other authorities on the Gold Coast. We saw helicopters taking off on a quite regular basis. Some stakeholders told us that they come and go just minutes apart at times.

The committee saw the potential for conflict. Many people go to the Spit to enjoy the natural values of the area. Others go there for the tourism experiences provided by some of the major operators. There is a potential for conflict between those coming to enjoy the natural values and those taking part in high-impact activities such as tours from the mini helicopter port. It was illuminating for the committee to visit the Spit and walk around and see exactly what was going on. We saw a very high degree of usage of the Spit by joggers, walkers, snorkelers, surfers and picnickers—an array of users. We heard that there was to be a polo match played at the Spit as part of an event on the Gold Coast.

We also saw the potential of the natural area of the Spit. I can understand why people have fought so strongly over the years for the area to be preserved and enhanced. There is a very large frontage to the ocean. It is very clear that there has been a lot of replanting, revegetation and weed clearing. That will happen more over the years so that the natural area expands and improves. Some of the submitters and stakeholders said that the Spit is such an iconic site in Queensland that it has the potential to be used like Central Park in New York. We saw the potential when we visited.

This is the start of the process to enhance the Spit and, as I have said, make it an iconic tourism destination for Queensland and visitors to the Gold Coast. I acknowledge and thank the government for allocating \$60 million to start that process. We will see a lot happen in this area over the coming years. The wonderful things we see will be traced back to the extensive consultation process undertaken to deliver the master plan. I commend the bill to the House.

In closing, I point out that yesterday I said that the Haughton pipeline was in Toowoomba. The members from Townsville quickly pointed out that mistake. I wish to correct the record and state that it is in Townsville.