




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

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ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

CO-OPERATIVES NATIONAL LAW BILL

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (12.43 pm): I rise to speak in support of the cognate debate of the Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Co-operatives National Law Bill. The Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was referred to my committee for inquiry in November last year, so my comments are largely directed at that bill. However, in general terms, both bills seek to achieve a similar aim. Both progress important reforms aimed at modernising and improving the regulatory framework within which associations incorporated and cooperatives in Queensland operate.

In respect of the Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, the bill progresses important reforms for more than 22,000 not-for-profit associations incorporated in Queensland. Every member of this chamber knows how important they are because we each have so many across our electorates. From local sporting groups, community and progress associations, Lions, Rotary and many others, they provide a service, connection and purpose for like-minded people across our communities and across Queensland, and that is why the reforms contained in the bill to clarify the operation of the Associations Incorporation Act to improve the internal governance of incorporated associations, reduce regulatory burden and streamline, enhance or otherwise improve governance processes are so welcome. Anything we can do to make the establishment and running of these entities easier for the volunteers who invariably run them is a positive and welcome reform.

Quite technical in nature, the bill attracted a small number of submissions to our committee inquiry from key stakeholders and peak bodies. As mentioned, the bill proposes a number of amendments aimed at reducing the regulatory burden experienced by incorporated associations and modernising the legislative framework that applies to them. For example, the bill will ensure all associations have the ability to conduct general meetings via communications technology if they desire to do so without necessarily having to amend any of their rules. The bill will also amend the act so that incorporated associations are no longer required to use a common seal. This will reduce red tape for associations in the execution of contracts and other documents and will bring the Associations Incorporation Act into line with equivalent legislation in other states.

The bill also introduces a requirement for incorporated associations to have a formal mechanism by which to address internal disputes to ensure parties to a dispute attempt to resolve the matter internally before seeking adjudication through the court system. Importantly, the grievance procedure must enable a member to appoint any person to act on their behalf and provide each party to the dispute with an opportunity to be heard. The grievance procedure must also provide for mediation. The bill provides that, if an association's rules do not contain a grievance procedure or contain a grievance procedure that does not comply with the principles set out in the bill, the grievance procedure outlined

in the model rules will apply. This approach ensures all incorporated associations will be obligated to observe a compliant grievance procedure while also relieving associations of any implementation burden, as associations may choose to allow the model rule procedure to apply automatically. It is practical and measured and I believe of particular guidance to smaller associations incorporated that may not have access to expertise in drafting such a procedure but that equally should have such a mechanism in place for all parties involved.

The bill also introduces a number of amendments to clarify the operation of the act, including inserting an objects clause to clearly identify its purpose and scope, and introduces amendments to streamline internal governance processes—all of which I know will be welcomed by incorporated associations across Queensland. Stakeholders to the committee inquiry generally supported the bill but, however, raised a number of suggestions relating to amendments that will be the subject of further detailed consultation with regard to the Associations Incorporation Regulation 1999 and model rules.

In closing, on behalf of the committee I thank those individuals and organisations who made written submissions and the Queensland Law Society and Clubs Queensland which appeared before the committee. I also thank officials from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General who briefed the committee on the bill and responded to submissions and committee requests for further information. The committee made one recommendation—that the bill be passed—and I note that the legal affairs committee did likewise with regard to the Co-operatives National Law Bill. Accordingly, I commend the bills to the House.