




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2021

MOTION

Queensland Building and Construction Commission

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.21 pm): I again declare that I am a licensed builder under the QBCC Act and also a very proud tradie in Queensland. The reason we need to debate this motion tonight is not about female tradies and not about the regulator; it is about this minister, the mud, alleged corruption and all the issues that stink over at QBCC. There is one guy in this room tonight who is responsible. That is why this inquiry is—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The member will refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr BENNETT: The minister. That is why we need to back the motion moved tonight. Those opposite can deflect all they like. I ask the minister: what are you afraid of? After all these years, after all the reforms, let's have an open, transparent inquiry into the QBCC and let's put all these issues on the table. I guess, from the way the government members are deflecting tonight, it is exactly the case that they do not want people to have a good, hard look at what is going on over there. They do not want to deal with the allegations and the issues around conflict of interests. That is why these calls are justified.

We need to go back to the beginning to understand what the QBCC is about. It is about dealing with home owners and it is about the industry and about navigating a way forward and being able to deal with disputes. Most of us who take any time to really understand what is going on know that most people leave that process very bitterly disappointed and aggrieved and usually end up on the wrong side of the QBCC. That is the problem we are seeing day in and day out.

We know that there are problems in the building industry. There have been for generations. The question is: why do we have so many disputes around dysfunction in Queensland right now? I guess it is about the regulations that the minister was spruiking before. Is it about the dysfunctional QBCC? Is it about the dysfunctional minister? Those opposite treat the QBCC as a plaything and have done so for years. I am sorry that former minister Schwarten is not still here in the chamber. We could talk about how he dealt with public works.

We have to acknowledge that you cannot treat such an important agency with so much disdain and so much cover-up. You need to be able to speak to people in QBCC. You need to be able to speak to someone that you trust, someone with integrity and someone with knowledge, and you want to know that they have your back. I suggest that a lot of builders and home owners do not feel like that after they have gone through a process with an industry regulator that is so far out of touch.

We know that both parties are often let down in this process. If members need an example, I refer to the issues around the fire protection industry. That will be talked about tonight. Can you believe that on Monday so many of the mum-and-dad businesses that are not backed by a big union will go to the wall? There will be bankruptcies, dysfunction and mass sackings. This is again about this union dominated Service Trades College. I predict here tonight that a lot more will come out about this

so-called set-up. We know that work is being done on the background of this issue. That is another reason to have an inquiry into the processes and the decisions made by this board, this minister and this government. They are dodgy deals and they need to be held to account.

A local example is of Leanne, who has been trying to resolve an issue for eight years. She was told in writing by the previous commissioner that her house should be knocked down and rebuilt. I want to talk about home warranty insurance in a minute. This is a matter of deflection, of dragging the little person down and hoping they will go away. I say to Leanne: the QBCC has failed you. They have not provided adequate support. People need to have their say at a proper inquiry into the QBCC.

A matter that really gets everyone upset is the internal review process. If you get an internal review, usually it reverses the decision of the regulator anyway. How can we have trust? How can we have confidence in the process? This is nothing new, though. In 2017 there was a groundswell of support in the community for an investigation into how the QBCC was operating. Toxic culture was mentioned. They talked about the issues of Queensland Rail in 2017 and called for an inquiry, so this is nothing new. This is just more evidence of why we need to turn a spotlight on how the government treats some of these agencies. We need to know about the 30 people who have left this agency—the commissioner, the deputy commissioner, three assistant commissioners and 10 directors—in the last 12 months. Something stinks over there and there needs to be an inquiry.

We really need to back the member for Everton's motion. It is sensible. If the government and the minister have nothing to hide, they should stand up, show some maturity and leadership, stop treating Queenslanders arrogantly and being out of touch, get rid of the nepotism and start the inquiry so that we can shine a light on the problems.