




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (12.16 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the bill before us. One of the reasons for doing that is that it clearly contains some necessary steps for implementing our Queensland Building Plan. I commend the minister for overseeing the implementation of that plan. I think the point the minister made was right: we need to ensure we have a safer, fairer and more sustainable building and construction industry. This bill goes a long way towards advancing those reforms.

It is clear that the Queensland Building Plan and this bill are needed given the importance of the building and construction industry. As we have heard, this industry supports 230,000 jobs in Queensland. When we convert that to numbers of households in Queensland, that is enormous. The industry is worth \$47 billion. Quite a large slice of Queensland's economy is tied up within this industry.

I pay tribute to the people in the industry, especially the people I see in my home community of Deception Bay. Deception Bay is home to probably more steel fixers than anywhere else in Queensland. I pay tribute to those men and women in my community who work in that industry—for not only doing a job we all need but also always focusing on not just how to get the job done but how to do it safely and ensure people get home safely every day. I commend them for their continual and constant focus on safety.

This industry puts food on the table for so many Queenslanders. This bill is necessary to ensure we are implementing the Queensland Building Plan. This bill makes it clear that we have already accomplished so much under the Queensland Building Plan. The minister has talked about the things the Palaszczuk government has done. For example, we introduced nation-leading security-of-payment reforms. As we have heard the minister say, we are making sure that we do everything we can to make sure people get paid on time every time. That is hugely importantly for this industry, as we know.

We have also introduced the nonconforming building products reform. We have talked a bit about that today with cladding. I point out to the members opposite who have been perhaps criticising us about the cladding issue that cladding is only one part of that. There is a range of building products which we are constantly looking at to make sure that they do conform and that they are safe.

As with the nature of the industry, once they are embedded in buildings it takes a huge effort to extract them in a safe manner. That is something that we need to remember all the time. Our best efforts need to go into making sure that those products are not getting into Queensland buildings in the first place. We are extracting them but it is a huge effort. I pay tribute to all of those people within the industry who work to make those buildings in Queensland safer once again.

I note that under our Building Plan we have modernised the plumbing and drainage laws. The plumbing industry has never been busier. Two plumbers live in my street and I hear how busy they have been. We have also strengthened the minimum financial requirements for licensing and we have strengthened the licensing framework for fire protection and mechanical services work. Once again, these are very much needed reforms. They might not have been the biggest reforms in some people's minds, but they are crucial to ensure we have a healthy industry.

In implementing this plan we strengthened the QBCC, and with this bill we are expanding their investigative powers. I want to take a moment—and we do not hear this often—to pay tribute to the people within the QBCC, the regulator in Queensland. They do crucial work. As the minister said, they oversee I think it is 17,000 engineers with their professional qualifications, and 110,000 contractors in Queensland come under their purview. It is a huge industry, as we have heard. There are very complex issues.

When we look at building integrity and building structures, they are massive issues that the QBCC oversees. I point out that they are working in the area of regulating the assets of so many Queenslanders. In Queensland, our houses are our biggest asset outside of super. Queenslanders have so much invested emotionally as well as financially in their houses. The QBCC is a regulator in that area. They are often in a very difficult position. They are constantly under a lot of pressure. They do cop a lot of criticism because of how much Queenslanders are invested in their properties.

I commend them on their work. Well done. You work hard. Thank you for what you do. I do not think we often thank these workers. I acknowledge the good work they do with the industry groups. When we talk about the plumbing reforms, they have been working with the Plumbers Union and the Master Plumbers. They have done that very well. Adding to the thanks I give to the QBCC, I thank the minister's office once again for driving reform in this sector.

Ms Boyd: Aren't you a gentleman!

Mr WHITING: Thank you. I take that interjection. That is one interjection I do want to take. As I said, there is not only a huge financial investment in building in Queensland but also a huge emotional investment by Queenslanders.

I will wrap up by saying that I commend this bill because of the support it delivers to Queensland's demand for solar power. We know that we are a world leader in solar panel installation. The biggest solar plant in Australia is on the roofs of Queensland houses and buildings. A lot of us are generating solar and we are part of that generating system. As we heard, one in three homes in Queensland has solar panels on their roof. There is a huge appetite amongst Queenslanders to have solar panels on their roof to produce their own energy to use at home.

That huge appetite is also reflected in the growth of solar energy plants—the bigger ones we have seen growing all around our state. When we first came to government in 2015 there was a very small solar and renewable energy industry. I think only about seven per cent of our power came from renewable sources. That is now at about 21 per cent. That is a huge uptake in seven years. This is something that I think is overlooked—how Queensland has rapidly adopted on every scale renewable industries and solar power. Let us not forget that this industry is a \$10 billion investment in Queensland. We have seen 50 large-scale renewable energy projects since 2015. Let us not forget there are 7,800 jobs in construction in the renewable industry, and most of those jobs are in regional Queensland.

I will finish by saying that this bill accomplishes a lot. I commend the minister and his staff, the QBCC and the department for all that they have done. I commend this bill to the House.