




Speech By  
**Kim Richards**

**MEMBER FOR REDLANDS**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2022

### **BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (12.32 pm): I rise to support the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I might just point out to the member for Southport that this year is the fifth anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 which drove many of the issues around combustible cladding, but I will come back to that later.

The Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is pretty technical in nature. It amends a range of building legislation to strengthen and modernise Queensland's building laws. We know how important the construction industry is to Queensland. We have heard about the significant contribution it makes to our economy. It also makes a very significant contribution to the lifestyle we lead, the amenities we are able to use and the built environment we are all surrounded by.

The bill amends the Architects Act 2002, Building Act 1975, Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payments) Act 2017, Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payments) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020, Planning Act 2016, Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018, Professional Engineers Act 2002 and the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991.

There are a number of key features in this bill. Many have touched on solar panels. We know how amazing our Queensland sunshine is and what value that brings, pushing down cost-of-living prices through solar. I know this bill will go a long way to ensure we can continue to capitalise on Queensland's sunshine for residents, communities and businesses. I would like to give a shout-out to REA Solar at Redlands Business Park. They do a fantastic job. They are an incredible provider of commercial and residential solar. I also want to give a shout-out to Minister Grace for the cleaner energy work we have been doing with schools and the solar program. I do not think anyone can underestimate what it means for our students and their learning to not only be in a cooler space but one that is greener through solar installation.

I congratulate the committee for its work on this legislation. The chair and I were talking about festivals, portaloos and whether they needed to be connected up to sewerage if a sewerage line exists. This bill goes a long way to making sure there is a more sensible approach to how we deal with waste from porta-potties at festivals and a number of other events. Well done to the best chair! Good job!

The bill amends head contractor licensing and sharing information on investigation outcomes. It also looks at decision-making for the QBCC around the combustible cladding aspect of the bill. Across the world combustible cladding has been the cause of fires in a wide variety of high-rise and commercial buildings. As I said, the 2017 fire in Grenfell Tower, a 24-storey building, resulted in the deaths of 72 people. Over 70 people were injured, it took 24 hours to control the fire and it took 60 hours to totally extinguish it. It required 250 firefighters and over 70 fire engines over the course of that period to bring it under control. The building's cladding and its external installation created an air gap between them, resulting in an air stack that fuelled the pace and speed of an apartment fire that was triggered by a fridge in a residential apartment.

Cladding used in high-rise construction has been an issue for decades: in 2007 the Water Club in Atlantic City had a fire caused by cladding; 2009, the Beijing Television Cultural Centre; 2012, the Al Tayer Tower in the UAE; and 2014, as we heard, the Lacrosse tower in Melbourne. It took 11 minutes for that fire to travel up 13 floors before it hit the rooftop. Fortunately, there were no lives lost in that particular fire. In 2021 in Milan, Italy, the Torre dei Moro also suffered a similar fire.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our architects, designers, builders and certifiers for their work in acknowledging the issue that has existed in the supply of this building product. In Queensland we established the Non-Conforming Building Products Audit Taskforce under the stewardship of the late Hon. Terry Mackenroth, which was a very important piece of work. It looked at government buildings in the first instance. I know this to be the case because at that time I was with Cox Architecture, and I know that the site architects in our firm were going 10 to the dozen to review the buildings we built over the course of a very long period of time, including: the PA Hospital in the early 2000s, the Logan Hospital in 1997, the convention centre in Brisbane, the convention centre in Cairns and all of the residential towers.

It has been a really big process to go through the buildings that have been developed across the course of decades which have the potential to contain that building product. You would be kidding yourself if you thought it was going to be a quick process to go through them, review, remediate and rectify. As I said, I really commend our architects, designers and building certifiers for their work in this space. I also thank the QBCC for their work, because it has been an equally massive effort for them when you think about the growth in the number of buildings in Brisbane and the south-east since Expo 88, let alone when you talk about the number of buildings in the entire state that have been affected by aluminium cladding.

The checklist that requires private building owners to self-assess their buildings has been a well-managed process. It ended on 3 May, with 94 per cent of building owners having completed it. Work is continuing to make sure we capture 100 per cent of the buildings that could have fallen foul of this product. This means that those building owners who have completed the process have either been cleared or provided a report from a fire engineer detailing the type of cladding, the extent of the problem and what actions can be taken to mitigate any fire cladding risk before rectifying their building. This is a comprehensive checklist. We had a team of five site architects in our Queensland office alone. I am not talking about across the country, where similar work has been done in architectural offices across Australia.

The buildings that are captured include apartments, hotels, offices, hospitals, shopping centres, car parks, warehouses, factories, schools, assembly buildings, aged-care facilities and laboratories, and the list goes on and on. This has been a huge effort. The first step of this was by our Queensland government. It was a three-phased approach, where it looked at the identification of the issue, the fire and risk mitigation process and then the rectification works. It has been a huge piece of work.

When we talk about the environment, we must think about the amount of this cladding that has had to come off buildings across the country. It is a phenomenal amount. Initially, all of that cladding was going into landfill—just think about the scale of the cladding on those buildings that was going into landfill sites. It is great to see that Queensland and Australian businesses are getting involved in that cladding recycling process. Fairview are one of those businesses. They developed an EcoLoop process and their business is booming at the moment, as they reported earlier this year. They are going from strength to strength.

The issue with the panels is that they typically contain ferrous material in the screws, steel flashing, rods, backing tape, you name it. A range of things were contained within those panels that made it impossible to recycle them. Fairview are just one business in Australia that are doing a great job to make sure we are able to recycle this dodgy cladding, so congratulations to them on that. It will be good to see more and more of the product recycled. We have the potential to recycle 100 per cent of that cladding in that process.

I also want to talk to some of the minor and technical amendments, particularly around the Architects Act. I give a shout-out to the Board of Architects and the team there. They do a fantastic job in regulating the Architects Act across Queensland. The minor amendment to the Architects Act and the Professional Engineers Act will see that they are afforded the same civil liability protections as the Queensland Public Service, and that is great news for our architects.

Consultation on this bill has been extraordinary. I congratulate the committee again for all of their work on this. It is an important piece of legislation to make sure we keep Queenslanders safe. I commend this bill to the House.