




Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**

**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

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

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (6.32 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. We take no issue with this bill. We support it broadly. It is particularly welcome to see the provisions around the expanded use of greywater. It might not feel like it at the moment, but it is incredibly important for this region to be as well prepared as we can be for any future droughts that we have to contend with.

One other element of the bill that I want to comment on reasonably briefly is the provisions that limit the circumstances in which a body corporate can prohibit the installation of solar panels. Again, these are good amendments. It is good stuff. It makes sense that we should not allow aesthetic concerns to be the basis on which home owners or unit owners are prevented from installing systems—whether they be solar PV or solar hot-water systems—on their roofs. Others have spoken to this. There is no doubt about the popularity of solar PV, particularly in South-East Queensland, and there is no reason why residents in strata title arrangements or unit owners should not be able to enjoy the same benefits, whether they be the environmental benefits that we get from renewable power or the cost savings that are increasingly available to people installing solar PV.

The bill articulates some circumstances in which bodies corporate will retain powers to prohibit such installations on common property. Again, we take no issue with that. Some sensible limitations must exist, for example, where it is necessary to maintain structural integrity or where there is insufficient space for every owner in the complex to install that kind of generation infrastructure. We might assume that there are circumstances where you could potentially make it available on a first in, first served basis, but I do not think that is really the key point.

I would say that these remaining limitations highlight the need for further reform to empower communities and simplify the processes around establishing community-owned and decentralised renewable energy generation at a small or a medium scale. I believe there is a very important role in our renewables transition for virtual power plants. I have spoken to folks in my electorate who are very keen to get those kinds of medium-scale installations together and to run their own virtual power plant. However, there are very real obstacles that exist in the bureaucracy around shared ownership and the licensing requirements for generation.

We can look to the example of the Community Power Hubs Program in Victoria. I understand it began with a relatively small trial that was very successful and the program has now expanded to provide lots more opportunities for those kinds of community power hubs. There are certainly other steps that the state government could take to support low-income and social housing residents to access solar and energy efficiency, including supporting the COAG framework for energy efficiency minimum standards, although that is getting some way away from the issues addressed in the bill.

The final point I make is around the role of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management. In recent years I have heard concerns raised repeatedly by stakeholders around the need for additional resourcing for the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management. The work of the BCCM Commission is the envy of lots of other jurisdictions. They do very important work.

However, if they are not resourced properly it will be difficult for them to perform that function as well as they could and as well as strata title owners might expect them to. This additional regulation around solar installations does risk adding to an already unmanageable workload. That was raised directly by the Strata Community Association in their submission. They raised the capacity and resourcing problems of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management.

It would be of value to the House if the minister could address that issue. I note that the BCCM Commissioner sits within the Attorney-General's portfolio so it may not be an appropriate question, but I welcome any additional information about how the commissioner might be additionally resourced to deal with the existing backlog, resourcing and capacity constraints and how that might flow on to the bit of additional work that will come through this regulation. As I said at the outset, this is a welcome suite of reforms. We will be supporting this bill.