




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (7.41 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the Economic Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. As a member of the Cost of Living and Economics Committee, I thank all committee members but in particular the secretariat. Given the timeframes of bills being pushed through the House and the enormous amount of work that is being undertaken by the secretariat, I acknowledge their contribution to the report that was tabled.

The Queensland Housing Summit, held in October 2022, made a series of recommendations, one of which was the reform of Economic Development Queensland to further strengthen its remit to deliver more housing supply across the state. It begs the question: why was this not seen sooner by the Queensland government, why was this legislation not brought forward and why did it take a housing round table and a significant crisis in this state to see reform put forward in this House, almost a decade since Labor came to power?

To achieve its objectives, the bill proposes to amend the Economic Development Act 2012 to increase housing supply, affordability and diversity by creating new pathways for EDQ to facilitate development. We on this side of the House recognise that there are important levers that governments need to pull to facilitate development, to de-risk development and to ensure supply and diversity of stock across communities, particularly in the regional communities of Mackay and the Whitsundays. It is also important that we see this bill deliver investment powers and activities that will allow the Minister for Economic Development to make significant decisions. There will be enormous powers associated with this, and the committee asked many questions of the department to ensure the new structure they have proposed as part of the bill will provide the agility and the flexibility that both the minister and the government of the day need to facilitate the objectives of the bill by adjusting the corporate structure and maximising a skills-based board. I note that many submitters were concerned about the make-up of the board and what they see as the expertise that is required to see EDQ align with commercial development that delivers social and affordable housing.

Many members before me spoke about the opportunity that governments have when it comes to community and social housing and that it is a very serious issue. I would like to highlight, in particular, some of the concerns that were raised by submitters including the Local Government Association of Queensland. It is important to know that in the case of many PDAs across this state—including the one I led as deputy mayor and chair of the planning committee of Mackay Regional Council—it is the council that takes the significant risk of community consultation and engagement when it embarks upon a PDA. It is extensive community consultation, and it is expensive. It is an investment in the local community because those regional councils understand what their community needs. Government decided to undertake a major reform in a period when local councils were in caretaker mode. Throughout that time we saw a significant change in local government leadership across this state. Even EDQ recognised that capacity in local councils would need to be built further to understand what the opportunities are in the review of the PDAs to facilitate greater investment in social and community housing.

I heard the chair talk about this being a serious issue. Community and social housing in our regions is a very serious issue. When I was elected to this House I had held positions on our local community housing board, Mackay community housing company Connect Housing. I sought meetings with then minister Enoch, who had failed to sign off on agreements between the local council, the community housing provider and the state that we have since seen Minister Scanlon sign off. It has taken almost a decade. In that time there has been an opportunity cost—a loss of opportunity by the community housing provider to embark upon renewal and investment. The price of construction has skyrocketed and we have not seen what the community housing sector could have delivered in my region of Mackay had this Labor government not been dragged kicking and screaming—they were so risk averse—to invest and collaborate with the community housing sector. I am, frankly, tired of the lip-service that has been paid by those opposite—in particular, the new Premier, the former state development minister who oversaw an area that the current minister has now taken swift action on. The opposition supports this bill because we know that these are some of the levers that government can pull to help to facilitate development in regional areas.

I will highlight some of the concerns that were raised, in particular around third-party agreements to deliver social and affordable housing. The Planning Institute of Australia and the Urban Development Institute of Australia certainly support third-party agreements. This is about enhancing EDQ's ability to ensure affordable and social housing targets can be met and it can be facilitated as part of development within PDAs. They raised, along with LGAQ, that it is important that EDQ not be a competitor with industry. It should complement industry, be a facilitator, de-risk where it can and provide investment surety and security.

In regional areas like mine, across Mackay and the Whitsundays, there is a lot of opportunity, including projects like Whitsunday Paradise, Hidden Valley Estate, older developments in Cannon Valley and in the northern beaches, at Shoal Point Waters. There are retirement villages that want to go into my community of Bucasia but the trunk infrastructure investment is an impediment to council, private development and sustainable development. We need to partner with the state government. We need investment by state government in very expensive pieces of infrastructure like drainage and transport corridors, ensuring they can keep up with growth and facilitate development and livability.

I urge Economic Development Queensland, and the minister who oversees the organisation and their board as part of their new structure, to identify where there are failings when it comes to planning instruments and local government infrastructure plans. We have seen a failure in regional plans that have not kept up to date to facilitate development. When we look at many of the planning schemes and the PDAs that have been sitting around this state for decades without development occurring, one has to ask why. This government has not invested in strategic economic infrastructure such as roads, drainage and flood mitigation in areas where there is a high need for housing, where there is industry, like the mining sector of the Bowen Basin, and where there are tourism jobs, like in my region of the Whitsundays. We have not seen planning, development and investment by this state government keep up with the demand we are feeling across our region.

This legislation will also introduce place renewal areas and place renewal frameworks. It will allow the compulsory acquisition of land, and I note the concerns of my colleague and the deputy chair, the member for Mermaid Beach, and those which were raised by many around compulsory acquisition, the significant direction of powers and in particular the direction around infrastructure charges and what that means to industry. This Labor government has failed to deliver on its responsibility of social and community housing. When we look at the data and the waitlist it is evident. We can look at the legislation that is being passed right before an election because no-one had the foresight to pass this legislation years before, when levers could have been pulled by Economic Development Queensland to help facilitate and fast-track social and community housing. It is not the fault of those in the department; it is the lack of leadership by those ministers and the now Premier who have failed Queenslanders.