




Speech By  
**Sandy Bolton**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 11 June 2024

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (8.27 pm): As we know, addressing housing and homelessness is a must. This bill is another aspect of those efforts. After many years of warning signs that were ignored by all levels of government over multiple decades, the Queensland Housing Summit was held in October 2022. One of the many actions of the summit's outcomes report was to strengthen the remit of Economic Development Queensland to deliver more housing supply across the state, including new social and affordable housing in the context of urban renewal and precincts. The provisions in the Economic Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 propose to deliver EDQ a new operating model as part of strengthening its remit.

In addition, the bill provides the Minister for Economic Development Queensland the flexibility to fund, deliver, facilitate and/or supply affordable housing by providing a power to enter into an agreement with a third party to develop and operate affordable housing. It also expands the power of the minister in relation to priority development area development approvals specifically in relation to social and affordable housing.

While I acknowledge that speed is critically important in addressing our housing crisis, I agree with stakeholders who called for greater consultation by the minister and EDQ in relation to their expanded powers under the bill. While the Planning Institute of Australia supported the amended purpose of the act, it recommended that the bill be amended to add that the powers under the ED Act be exercised in a balanced manner which advances the public interest. This is really important. As I raised in response to the recent housing availability and affordability bill and the related changes to the Planning Regulation which allow development applications to bypass local government, these kinds of powers should be used sparingly and with great consideration and community consultation.

The bill also introduces a new concept of place renewal areas within PDAs with the purpose being to 'establish a governance framework to bring together government, community and industry stakeholders to deliver thriving and sustainable precincts that will generate increased social, environmental and economic value'. That all sounds wonderful. However, what does that really mean? The department states that it 'will allow the MEDQ to take a place-making and leading coordination role across a precinct' allowing EDQ 'to take a proactive leadership role in the urban renewal of an area to facilitate and coordinate precinct-wide outcomes'. For the home seekers out there, what does that tangibly mean in delivering affordability?

Stakeholders expressed their support, with Studio THI, an urban renewal NGO, submitting that this will 'increase EDQ's ability to drive sustainable place-based urban outcomes and accelerate the delivery of critical policy (such as housing diversity and affordability) in partnership with other government agencies, community housing providers and industry'. That is a mouthful, and again I am trying to understand how I can relay to those who are in desperate need of affordable housing how the affordability will be delivered through this. Some stakeholders raised concern that place renewal areas would not address the issues related to social and affordable housing as intended, instead saying these were 'an imperfect compromise'.

This bill has also raised concerns that the minister 'may' seek advice from any third party, body or person in assessing and deciding a PDA development application and is not required to consult with anyone. We need some clarification regarding this. There are also many questions. Will the expanded powers being provided through this bill be exercised in a balanced manner which advance the public interest? Ultimately, will this bill deliver what is needed, including the innovation required to deliver affordable housing to meet community expectations, without overriding local governments?

There have been so many aspects identified over the years and via the Housing Summit to address affordability such as a reduction in taxes and charges and construction costs, which I raised earlier, and better utilisation of public housing and land. I feel sometimes what we are doing is taking what can be simple and making it much more complex than it needs to be. However, as I said in relation to an earlier bill, every little bit counts and it helps, even if it is difficult to ascertain what that help actually is in terms of affordability. I do want to thank the minister, the department, the committee and their secretariat, and all those who gave time to provide feedback on the bill. We do appreciate what is being fought for.

It is now time to end the 'blame game' and move forward. However, as I have previously requested, including of the commissioner, as part of increasing the capabilities of the public sector, a full analysis needs to be undertaken of the last 30 years—yes, 30 years. Earlier I mentioned that 30 years ago across Australia we had seven per cent social housing; now we are under four per cent. This is a critical part of what is being experienced. We need to understand what happened over those three decades—how we arrived at this crisis, including what happened to the forecasting amongst this. We need to do this in order to avoid it going into the future and also in other realms.

May we now make tangible, lasting changes that ensure parliaments of the future—because we are not going to be here forever—are not grappling with the failings of the past or potentially of present decisions we are now making so that Queenslanders can all enjoy a stable roof over their heads without having to go without, including food, to do so. This is now what we must focus on.