



Speech By  
**Tim Mander**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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**HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY (PLANNING AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; BUILDING INDUSTRY FAIRNESS  
(SECURITY OF PAYMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (4.23 pm): I rise to speak on the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill that is part of the cognate debate and I will say a few words about the housing bill as well. I also refer to the Speaker's ruling this morning. I acknowledge that there was one ministerial statement and not 18 ministerial statements, so I apologise for misleading the House. I put that on the record.

The Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill brings some issues to light that we have not spoken about for a while, that is, the make-up and operations of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, the QBCC.

**Ms Boyd:** Oh God!

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection. We are talking about so-called reforms of the QBCC, and the member for Pine Rivers interrupts with a sigh because she obviously wants the old ways that were in place to remain. What were those old ways?

**Mr Smith:** You know the old ways.

**Mr MANDER:** I take the interjection from the member for Bundaberg as well. What are they addressing? This is what they are addressing. The QBCC Board was stacked with Labor Party wannabes and has-beens. Those are the people who were on the board of the QBCC. The former head of the Queensland Labor Party was the chair. The former Labor minister for housing and public works was on the board. A current senior executive of the CFMEU was on the board. There was another union official from the fire protection industry on the board of the building regulator. One of the reasons we are here today is because of the Varghese report, which looked at some of these issues. They were told, time and time again throughout that review, that there were unbelievable conflicts of interest. The board was stacked with Labor Party stalwarts who were seat warmers and nothing more than that—

**Mr Lister:** Stooges.

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the member for Southern Downs. They proved to be totally and utterly ineffective. There were 10 members. Not all of them fell into that category but the majority of them did. This bill addresses some of those issues. That was the make-up of the board and the composition of those on the board.

The other issue, as I have already mentioned—and I want to be a bit more specific—is the conflict of interest issue. A person on the board was the head of a fire protection organisation and also the head of the union or association that was responsible for those workers. He was promoting laws that would benefit his organisation and his members to the detriment of small business owners. I had tens and tens of small business owners in the fire protection sector—

**Mr Skelton:** He can't count to five. Is that a hundred, 10 by 10?

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the genius from Nicklin. Every now and then we hear a murmur. The only time we hear from the member for Nicklin is late at night on Twitter or Facebook and it is incredibly entertaining. We love it. Small businesses in the fire protection industry—people who had been in the business for 40 and 50 years; tens and tens of years in the industry—were suddenly told that they were no longer qualified to do their job and, in fact, that they had to get a qualification. Where would they get the qualification from?

**Mr Bennett:** From the union.

**Mr MANDER:** Exactly. I take the interjection of the member for Burnett. They were to get it from the union-run colleges. That is where they would get it. Once again there was a circular economy to promote the trade union movement. We know what those opposite owe the trade union movement. We know what the Premier owes the trade union movement to be in the position he is in: payback after payback. What is happening here is that amendments are being made to address some of those conflict of interest issues that were very apparent and also to try to improve the capacity and the effectiveness of the board. We still need to work out whether those amendments will be effective. At least this is a start.

The other thing that has changed here—and this is again related to what I just said about the fire protection industry—is that this bill will change who prescribes the technical aspects of a licence. Who should do it? Should it be the QBCC or should it be the department? The Varghese report said that we need to get away from the situation where the QBCC is both prescribing and regulating. There should be a delineation between those two roles, and that is what is happening now with it going back to the department, so it is very clear that the QBCC is all about regulation.

The other issue that was canvassed in this bill was project bank accounts. Everybody on this side of the House believes that subcontractors should be paid, should be paid on time and should be paid progressively. If it all goes a cropper, there should be some sort of security for our subcontractors so that they get the money that they deserve for the work that they have put in and the services that they have provided. The construction sector has had questions about project bank accounts. It is worried about how bureaucratic they are, it is worried about how inflexible they are, it is worried about how costly they are and it questions their effectiveness. It questions whether they do secure subcontractor payments, because there have been examples where companies have fallen over and the money for subcontractors has fallen through and not been paid despite having project bank accounts.

This bill makes it a little bit more flexible with regard to some of the requirements that are asked of contractors and clarifies which subcontractors are covered in the supply chain and whether GST should be included in retention payments. Again, the building sector disagrees with that. It thinks that GST should not be included. It believes that that affects its cash flow, which is hard to argue with, so it is important that we get the framework right and I think the jury is still out with regard to whether the framework is right at this stage.

The changes that have been brought in as a result of the Varghese report were necessary because of the dysfunction of the QBCC. Week in and week out we heard controversy after controversy, and some of these issues have now been addressed. There is plenty more to happen. As the shadow minister, I still get six, seven or eight QBCC issues in a week from both consumers and builders. People are aghast that it takes on average 26 weeks for a building inspector to come out to see their property after a report has been made, so that is one of the primary roles of the QBCC not being fulfilled.

I have to agree, just to digress for a moment, with some of the previous speakers on the other part of this cognate debate that after 9½ years this government now believes it is addressing the housing issue when we have had nothing but crisis and chaos in that period of time. The rental situation in this state in terms of both cost and availability is the worst it has ever been. It has never been more expensive to build a home and it has never been a worse time for our most vulnerable people who find themselves sleeping in parks, sleeping on park benches, sleeping in cars and sleeping on people's lounges. It is not good enough.