




Speech By  
**Charis Mullen**

**MEMBER FOR JORDAN**

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**PLANNING (SOCIAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (8.09 pm): I value good planning. I see its worth and I recognise the impact it can make in our communities and our state. In my previous life, I spent over a decade working in planning—both in the public and private sectors—and I saw the positive outcomes that can be achieved with strong planning guided by community buy-in.

Planning certainty is also important. One of the key issues that any housing or infrastructure investor will tell you is critical to their developments or projects is planning certainty. Planning certainty matters: it impacts investment decisions, it supports community expectations and it provides clear transparency around decision-making. Unfortunately, the bill before us is less about planning certainty and more about ideology—and that is a dangerous thing because it would seem that the Crisafulli LNP government is only interested in undermining the clean energy transition in our state by imposing a unique front-loaded framework onto renewable projects that require mandatory assessments and agreements before development applications can even be lodged.

The bill amends a number of Queensland acts to introduce a 'community benefit system' into the state's planning approval framework for specific developments. This includes two components—a social impact assessment and a community benefit agreement. The bill provides that developments that require a social impact assessment, SIA, will be prescribed by regulation. If an SIA is required, the development application must be accompanied by an SIA report and a community benefit agreement made with the local governments in affected local government areas. A consultation version of the draft Planning Regulation was tabled during the explanatory speech and indicates that developers of wind farms and large-scale solar farms will be subject to the community benefit system proposed in the bill.

Despite the Premier directing his planning minister to ensure that renewable energy projects face consistent approval processes with mining and agriculture, the bill does the opposite. The Queensland Law Society summed it up when they said—

... these reforms are likely to adversely impact the renewable energy industry in Queensland in a way that is inconsistent with other types of development under the planning system, or resources projects under other legislation.

Singling out renewables with heavier, pre-lodgement obligations does seem to create an unfair, anticompetitive framework and you cannot help but wonder whether this is really about slowing Queensland's clean energy transition. It is so hard to understand why the LNP does not want renewable energy projects or investment to succeed in our state. They are sending a terrible message to renewable energy investors that Queensland is simply not open for business—that and appointing the member for Mudgeeraba as the trade minister.

A recent member survey by the Queensland Renewable Energy Council found low levels of confidence in current state government policies regarding investment certainty. About 26 per cent of respondents 'strongly disagreed' with the statement that the Queensland government's policy settings

effectively promoted investment certainty in renewables; 33 per cent 'disagreed'; and 35 per cent were 'neutral' in response to the statement. So a staggering 94 per cent either disagreed or were neutral about the LNP government's policies—94 per cent!

Given the lack of any meaningful consultation on this bill, there are of course practical considerations that have not been considered. The Queensland Renewable Energy Council submitted that often the parameters of a project are not fully understood until later in the development process and that this could lead to the SIA and CBA having to be revised multiple times before an application is ready for approval. As they advised—

We are particularly concerned by the requirements to complete an SIA and a CBA before lodging a development application. This approach is unprecedented. We recommend that these be embedded within the DA Development Application assessment process, in line with other jurisdictions and the resources sector. This would avoid prematurely binding landholders, reserve local government resources for credible projects, enable a more integrated, staged process aligning CBAs, impact assessment and conditioning.

As referenced in the committee report, the Central Highlands Regional Council expressed a similar concern, submitting that the SIA and CBA will occur before the detailed reports and plans have become available at the development assessment stage and that this information is key to appropriately understanding impacts and potential solutions. Again, without early consultation, no implementation plan or any clear strategy on how local governments will be expected to take on these new complex responsibilities, local governments are rightly concerned. Local governments submitted to the committee that they lack the specialist expertise, staffing and funding needed to assess SIAs and negotiate community benefit agreements. They want more support from the state government including state funded training, model contract templates and support by the state when their capacity is exceeded.

It is important that we support local governments through this significant transition to renewables. This is work that the former Labor government was progressing through the release of a Draft Renewables Regulatory Framework. The framework proposed reforms to strengthen environmental considerations, improve community engagement whilst supporting regional economic development and project delivery. We recognise the issues of concern for our local governments and community. As the Mayor of Isaac Regional Council submitted—

In Isaac, we do welcome renewable investment but the speed, scale and complexity of the transition is running well ahead of the rules meant to manage it. Currently, our regions have no tools or framework to guide development, minimise impacts or maximise benefit for the people and communities that are at the forefront of the renewables boom.

The Local Government Association of Queensland recommended that the government ensure a coordinated approach to the development of renewable energy initiatives across state government agencies, including the development of a renewable energy roadmap—that would be good—a mandatory code of conduct for renewable energy proponents, a social licence toolkit, as well as changes to statutory and non-statutory planning instruments. As the committee report found, similar sentiments on the need for a coordinated approach were also expressed by other stakeholders from the local government and energy sectors.

We have a bill before us that has been rushed, with inadequate consultation and of course through the prism of a policy vacuum when it comes to energy policy—no assessments done on the impact of project delays and cost, investment confidence, energy prices or emissions targets; no modelling; and no discussion with the Australia government on what this means for national climate commitments. How embarrassing for Queensland.

I also welcome the shadow minister's amendments to mandate the timely publication, within five business days, of all assessment and approval documents for games venues, villages and related transport infrastructure, to create a public register of Olympic related venues and to require statements of reasons for any legislative overrides. Queenslanders deserve to know what the government is doing when it comes to Olympic infrastructure approvals, especially given the bill will be removing established assessment and approval processes, bypassing numerous environmental, planning and heritage laws. Queenslanders deserve transparency, good governance and good planning. Sadly, they will not find it in this bill.