



Speech By
Donna Kirkland

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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



Mrs KIRKLAND (Rockhampton—LNP) (8.03 pm): I rise today to speak in strong support of the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. This bill is a landmark step in reshaping Queensland's planning framework to better reflect the values of fairness, transparency and community empowerment. This bill is not just a technical amendment; it is a statement of intent. It says that development in Queensland must be not only economically viable but also socially responsible. It says that communities like mine in Rockhampton deserve a seat at the table when decisions are being made that affect their future.

At the heart of this bill is the introduction of a community benefit system into the Planning Act 2016. This system requires proponents of certain large-scale developments, such as wind farms and solar farms, to undertake a social impact assessment and enter into a community benefit agreement with the local government before lodging a development application. As a former councillor for Rockhampton Regional Council with the portfolios of water and environment, the recklessness of existing legislation became increasingly obvious. I was not alone in questioning the impacts to our communities that I was observing within my role.

A prime example of the shortcomings that this bill addresses is state code 23, which governs wind farm development in Queensland. While well-intentioned, the code has been widely criticised for its lack of enforceable community consultation requirements and limited transparency. It allowed wind farms to proceed with minimal local input, often leaving communities feeling sidelined. This bill begins the correction of rushed cart-before-the-horse legislation and building codes, flipping the script. It front-loads community engagement, requiring developers to build social licence and demonstrate how their projects will deliver lasting, positive outcomes for host communities.

In Rockhampton, where renewable energy projects are increasingly part of our economic landscape, this reform is especially relevant. Our region has the land, the sun and the wind, but we also have people who care deeply about their environment, about their livelihoods and about their future. This bill ensures that their voices are heard and that their needs are met. Beyond planning, the bill also amends the Economic Development Act 2012 to enhance the governance of Economic Development Queensland. These changes will help drive housing supply in priority development areas, which is another issue of great importance to Rockhampton where housing affordability and availability continue to remain as pressing concerns.

Let us not overlook the amendments to the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements Act 2021. These changes streamline governance and ensure that the legacy of the 2032 games is one of inclusion, efficiency and long-term benefit not just for Brisbane but for all of Queensland. For Rockhampton, this legacy includes vital Olympic infrastructure projects, such as a world-class venue for rowing and canoeing. These investments not only put our regions—plural—on the global sporting stage but also serve as enduring legacy assets for local recreation, tourism, housing and economic development.

The bill helps facilitate these developments by strengthening planning pathways and aligning them with the community's expectations. Importantly, the Local Government Association of Queensland—LGAQ—which represents councils across the state, has thrown its support behind this bill, recognising its potential to empower local governments and deliver better outcomes for communities. The State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee noted in its report that the bill enhances transparency, empowers local governments and provides certainty to industry. These are not just bureaucratic improvements; they are tangible steps toward a more inclusive and accountable planning system.

For Rockhampton, this bill means more than legislative reform; it means that when a wind farm is proposed near Gracemere or a solar project is proposed near Stanwell our community will have a formal role in shaping the outcome. It means that benefits, whether in the form of local jobs, infrastructure or environmental offsets, will be negotiated up-front and not as an afterthought. It also means that our local council will be better equipped to advocate for our interests, and that developers will have a clear framework for earning the community's trust.

This is planning done right. It is planning that respects people. It protects places and it promotes prosperity. I commend this bill to the House.