




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 25 June 2025

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

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.22 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. There is a lot to say about this bill but not enough time. On behalf of the opposition members of the committee, I want to thank the secretariat for the incredible work they did on this. We received over 1,100 submissions on this bill. It was a hefty bill for us to work through. I thank them and my fellow opposition committee members—the members for Kurwongbah and Aspley—for their work on this. Regrettably, that is where the platitudes stop.

I will again make the point that the committee report goes nowhere near a balanced view that we would expect from a parliamentary committee. Committees are, in effect, the upper House in Queensland. I appreciate that it is the government's bill and it is the chair's report. Not only does the committee report not balance the views of both the opposition and the government members; it in no way represents the many concerns that we heard throughout the committee hearings.

There were over 1,100 submissions received and none of them, as far as I can recall, supported the bill as drafted. They, like us, supported the policy intent of the bill but most, if not all, submitters called out a range of grave concerns for Queensland if this bill were to proceed in this format. None of those views is contained in this report, and that is a direct reflection of a government that wants to control the narrative and not be transparent with Queenslanders about policy flaws.

The Deputy Premier might secretly gloat about having that level of control over the chair and over the report, but I remind the Deputy Premier that those 1,100 stakeholders are watching and they have seen the sham consultation process around this bill. They have also seen the integrity issues attached to the committee process where taxpayer funds were used to fly a member of parliament with a potential conflict of interest in relation to the bill near a property that they own which might be impacted by this bill. This is an extremely dangerous precedent for the government to set less than one year into their leadership.

I will now address the planning bill itself, which is so glaring in its hypocrisy and recklessness that stakeholders, including the Bar Association, have labelled it extraordinary. There are two principal aspects of the bill that sit in complete contradiction to one another. One aspect raises the approval obligations on renewable energy projects to a threshold not seen in Queensland's planning framework before. It is a threshold that not even coal and gas projects have to meet on the basis that consultation is important, which it is. The other aspect of this bill removes the consultation from Olympic projects as well as all environmental, heritage and most cultural protections. Let me start there.

Queenslanders may not have the right to stop a major development proceeding in their area, but they do have the right to have their say. This bill does away with that. The Deputy Premier has inferred that the opposition is trying to block the Olympics in speaking against this bill, which is an absurd argument. It was a Labor government that bid for the Olympics. It was a Labor government that won the right for Brisbane to be a host city. The Crisafulli government does not get to rewrite history on that.

Labor governments also believe in transparency. We believe in good planning. We believe that people have the right to have a say and to know why governments make the decisions that they make. We also believe that small businesses procured to undertake work on a project have the right to take a proponent to court if that proponent does not pay up. This bill will do away with all of those rights for Queenslanders.

The Deputy Premier justifies his reckless behaviour by saying that this bill is necessary to get Olympic infrastructure built, but we know that that is not the case. Multiple witnesses fronted the committee and confirmed that Olympic infrastructure can still be built on time without the need to cut communities out of consultation or to entirely bypass Queensland's environment and heritage laws. The 100-day review recommends using existing mechanisms to ensure planning and approval requirements are obtained efficiently. Absurdly, this is recognised in the explanatory notes of the bill, but the Deputy Premier instead wants to pursue a planning pathway that is currently illegal in Queensland. Rather than simply go back to the 100-day review and utilise existing planning pathways, he has introduced a bill that sanctions his preferred approach and, in doing so, tramples the rule of law, including denying individuals access to the courts.

KC Cate Heyworth from the Bar Association of Queensland warned the committee about the risks, including the risk that the stadiums will be delayed through High Court challenges. She said—

Aside from the breathtaking dismantling of the rights of individuals, this appears very much to be a challenge to the institutional integrity of the Supreme Court by state legislation ... there is High Court authority which may be called in aid of having that legislation struck down.

One would think at this point that we have reached rock bottom on this bill, but one thing Queenslanders can rely on the Deputy Premier for is his ability to find new lows. This bill also introduces a planning framework for renewable energy that will suppress the investment and approvals for wind and solar farms in this state, taking Queensland from being the No. 1 state and leading our nation's energy transformation to lagging behind the rest of the country. It is working-class Queenslanders and our small businesses which will suffer the most.

Numerous submitters to this inquiry warned us that the bill will add fewer energy projects to the grid and will dry up investment in projects in the regions and that our household energy bills will continue to rise. Media reports have identified 110 projects across Queensland, representing \$4 billion of direct investment into Queensland's regions and into Queensland's energy grid, which will potentially be caught up in the retrospective nature of the bill. Those projects will likely need to go back to the drawing board and essentially start their applications again. Alex Godina, the head of development for Cubico's sustainable investments, told the committee—

Retrospectivity in legislation has the ability to undermine industry and investor confidence, adding uncertainty and hesitancy with the fundamentals of the development process.

Tracey Stinson from the Clean Energy Council told the committee—

Retrospective legislation, burdensome red tape and absently defined and ambiguous processes will put Queensland's energy security at risk ...

Add to that revelations that Treasury were not asked to and have not completed any modelling on how the bill will impact the cost of electricity and that this government has scrapped household energy rebates, Queensland will end up with the highest power prices in the country because of the actions of the Deputy Premier, the member for Kawana.

The final note I will make on the bill is the disgraceful way that they have snuck amendments into the bill that will remove diversity on the organising committee for the Olympic Games board. While governments around the world are working on increasing diversity on boards, the Crisafulli LNP government are dedicating their time to removing those voices. There was no mention of this amendment in their explanatory notes or explanatory speech. They are quietly repealing the requirements for the organising committee board to have 50 per cent of nominated directors women and that at least one of the independent directors is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Stakeholders have labelled this move as an appalling decision—which it is.

While the opposition support many of the intentions of this bill—to strengthen relationships between project proponents and communities, and to ensure that Olympic infrastructure is delivered on time—this bill is an egregious attempt to deliver on those outcomes. It will have unintended consequences.

In their ideological pursuit against renewables, this government has introduced a bill that will have devastating impacts on Queensland, with regional Queensland hit the hardest. This bill will see investment in our regions go backwards. Energy prices are guaranteed now to rise, and who will feel that most? It will be working-class Queenslanders, families and our sporting groups who have massive

energy overheads and those in manufacturing and agriculture. We will see farmers who want to diversify their income through hosting renewable projects miss out and local councils will be left to foot the bill for community infrastructure projects. It will create a planning scheme that discourages the support for the Olympics at a time when we should be leveraging the opportunities that this major event will bring.

We all agree with the policy intent, and that in fact was the reason for putting our amendment forward. Appropriate and workable planning legislation matters, and public confidence matters. As the Deputy Premier's idol, Elvis himself, says, 'We can't go on together with suspicious minds,' and public confidence is really important. I can tell the House that, after receiving 1,100 submissions, there is no confidence in Queensland when it comes to this bill. The Crisafulli government's ideological and clumsy bill is an absolute train wreck for Queensland. They need to go back to the drawing board and start again.