




Speech By
Nigel Hutton

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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

 **Mr HUTTON** (Keppel—LNP) (5.26 pm): I rise this evening to speak on behalf of the people of Keppel in support of the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. While this bill deals with multiple items, I would like to focus my contribution on the item which has been the most pressing concern for my residents in Keppel. Central Queenslanders, including my communities of Keppel, are part of the front line of struggles between a not fit-for-purpose planning framework, an ideologically driven agenda that silenced the voice of our communities and a policy that has left a legacy of disconnect which has tied up our councils in knots and needs to be fixed.

In urban cities and in urban centres, town plans have scenic amenity performance outcomes which help manage the impact on visual amenity of new developments. As an example, the Livingstone Shire Council town plan speaks to minimising the impacts on the visual or scenic amenity caused by development—that is, it provides for performance outcomes that state that development—

- (a) is not visually prominent against the natural skyline when viewed from a public coastal viewer place;
- (b) is not visually prominent against the surrounding vegetation or other natural landscape ...

It goes on and ends with—

- (e) does not result in:
 - (i) scarring by exposed earthwork; or
 - (ii) canopy removal on hilltops, prominent headlands, ridges and hillslopes; or
 - (iii) modification of the natural environment which dominates the landscape;

For the communities of Keppel and for Central Queenslanders, these are important values—how we manage the livability of our communities as we grow, how we protect our region that we love and how we protect the natural wonder which is important. Yet, for current proposals in the renewable energy field, no such considerations apply. Scar the land, dominate the landscape, remove the canopy and forever change the skyline. It would not be considered automatically approved in Brisbane. In fact, I imagine there would be campaigns and petitions. Yet in Central Queensland this would be the case. I suggest these projects should not be automatically approved in regional Queensland.

It is important that MPs note the scale and size of renewable projects proposed in Central Queensland. They dwarf the surrounding communities. Wind farm structures are as tall as 1 William Street. Yet no consultation and no rigorous approval process are undertaken. These projects are deemed approved. It is only fair that, to give communities a say, such projects are impact assessable. Under this legislation, they would be subject to rigorous approval processes, as are other sector projects. Let's take another example. Last week Minister Perrett and I met with farmers.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hutton, adjourned.



Mr HUTTON (Keppel—LNP) (6.17 pm), continuing: As I was saying, last week Minister Perrett and I had the opportunity to meet with some farmers who put into stark contrast the difference between the obligations put against them versus someone looking to use the land for renewable energy projects. Did honourable members know that farmers need to apply for an MCU to allow them to convert a paddock that is being used for cattle to an orchard? However, if they were to put in renewable energy, no MCU is required. We can and we should do better.

The legacy of the current process here in Queensland means that there are 77 schemes and 77 processes and councils are being overwhelmed and challenged by large corporations. Solar farms have been assessed differently to wind farms, which are treated differently to other energy projects. Once we start looking at how different local governments and different local government planning schemes are applied, it is obvious: the capacity to manage these processes is affecting outcomes and having impacts to the detriment of our communities. Our communities live with the impact of these developments from the start to the end, be it the haulage damage, the temporary workforces or the market changes which affect the pricing on everyday goods, housing, infrastructure and local services. Yet until this legislation, there has been no formal requirement for a proponent to commit to delivering community benefits, unlike other resource related projects.

This bill is about restoring fairness and trust to Queensland's planning framework because regional Queenslanders deserve a framework that works for them. The current one is not working. Imagine if wind turbines were deemed approved on Mount Tamborine or Mount Coot-tha. I can only hypothesise that the communities of South-East Queensland would be lining up to support these changed laws.

I thank the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee for their work in progressing all of the submissions and for the time the committee invested in visiting communities including Rockhampton for their public hearings. I note the committee recommended that the bill be passed. I am proud to be part of a Crisafulli LNP government that is stepping up. We will ensure that communities are given voice and that every energy project is treated fairly. We will restore accountability for projects and provide improved transparency for our communities.