




Speech By  
**Mark Boothman**

**MEMBER FOR THEODORE**

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EMPOWERING COUNCILS) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (7.34 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise to make a contribution to the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Local government is the level of government that is closest to people's everyday lives. It is where decisions are made about the roads we drive on, the parks where children play, libraries, community halls, waste services, local planning and practical coordination that matters during disasters. When councils are empowered to act decisively and are held to clear and fair standards, our communities benefit. When councils are smothered in red tape, unclear rules and frameworks that discourage capable people from serving, our communities pay the price. That is why these reforms are about stronger and clearer local government, with less bureaucracy, more accountability and better service delivery.

First, this bill empowers councils. A council cannot deliver for its community if it cannot appropriately shape its own senior leadership team. That is why these reforms re-empower councillors to appoint senior executive employees through appointment panels comprising the mayor, the CEO and the deputy mayor or the relevant committee chair. That is a balanced model. It preserves professional input, ensures accountability for leadership and restores democratic oversight. In Brisbane City Council, this will re-empower councillors to appoint senior contract employees, including at the general manager level, recognising the scale and complexity of Australia's largest local government.

The legislation also amends the rating powers for Indigenous local governments. This is about fairness. The member for Townsville made a very good contribution about this when it comes to his community on Palm Island. These reforms provide clarity now and establish a framework to enable Indigenous councils to rate in the future when they choose to do so. Good governance relies on clear revenue tools, and these councils deserve the same clarity and stability that others enjoy.

Second, the bill empowers mayors while respecting the role of every councillor. Communities expect to know who speaks for their council. These reforms reiterate that the mayor is the official spokesperson of the council. That clarity matters for emergencies, major announcements and public confidence. Just as importantly, we make it clear that there is a single person who makes the announcements for the council so that gets rid of the confusion. If you think about it, most residents expect their local mayor to be the mouthpiece when it comes to these issues, or they can actually delegate.

Third, it restores a clearer, more workable conflict-of-interest framework. The current split system of prescribed and declarable conflicts of interest has not delivered the clarity it promised. It has created confusion, inconsistency and often processes over purpose. These reforms repeal that framework and return to the material personal interest and conflict-of-interest model that operated from 2013 to early 2018. It is a framework that councillors understand; it is one that focuses on genuine conflicts and one that supports transparent decision-making without paralysing councils.

There are so many good things about this bill and I know it is what the local councillors want. They are very keen for this on the Gold Coast because it builds the transparency they want and gets rid of undue red tape. It is exactly what councils need to grow on the Gold Coast and also restore confidence.

I know there are a lot of other members in this chamber who really want to speak on this bill, so I will leave my comments at that. This bill is good. This legislation is good for the community. It is creating transparency in council and this is what the community deserves.