



Speech by

**GLEN ELMES**

*Member for Noosa*

*Shadow Minister for Climate Change & Sustainability*

Hansard, Tuesday 15 September 2009

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### **Sustainable Planning Bill**

Second Reading Resumed from 3 September (see p. 2182), on motion of Mr Hinchliffe-- That the bill be now read a second time.

**Mr ELMES (Noosa--LNP) (12.40 pm):** I rise to make a relatively short conclusion to a speech I started 10 days ago on the Sustainable Planning Bill before the House. Queensland perhaps more than any other state is the place where people choose to live based largely on the grounds of lifestyle. Lower salaries for comparable work is a great indicator of the value that members of our community place on lifestyle, not income. Perhaps it is the key measure of this value. Lifestyle is greatly impacted by development decisions.

Under this bill decisions are made by the minister or a bureaucrat in George Street who are totally insulated from the things that matter to the people in those communities about whom these life-changing decisions are being made and who are blissfully unaware of their needs and aspirations.

The balance is tipped far too far towards development, with scant regard for the communities to say how it will be for them. Accordingly, I call on the government to take three progressive steps to meet the aspirations of local communities.

These are, firstly, to include an authority for local governments to prohibit development; secondly, to extend the periods of public consultation; and, thirdly, to delete the deemed approvals provisions.

Indeed, in an ideal world communities would be able to see the effect of public consultation on the instrument before it is finally decided. This two-stage process which I am advocating for all public consultation is already present in the redistribution process for electoral boundaries. It is a good, open, transparent process and it gives the public some confidence that their voice is actually heard and not just listened to. Such a process would redress the angst felt by communities that they are mostly regarded as a necessary evil, only to be courted and valued in the period immediately preceding an election and at no other time.

I am disappointed, given the title of the bill, that there is not even an attempt in the bill to address some form of mandatory environmental information when considering development applications.

That the bill is silent about this sends a strong message that the environment really does not matter to this government. I hope green groups are keenly aware of the adage 'By their actions shall ye know them', and that they take umbrage at the approach being taken here. This is an approach that need not rest in the too-hard basket.

Some of the government agencies consulted during the DA process could easily define the sort of environmental information essential to facilitate their consideration. It is a fact that it is not defined and that is a real worry.

Finally, developers are still able to refuse to supply information requested by councils. Section 278(1)(b) and (c) should simply be deleted. That it remains is a key example of how far this minister and this government will go to tip the balance in favour of this mad scramble for development at any cost.

This scramble appears to extend to the increased discretion given to the Planning and Environment Court to excuse noncompliance and to allow for major amendments to development conditions. The umpire needs to be independent and fair and justice needs to be done and to be seen to be done. Overall this bill does not meet the needs of my community, my electorate or the people whom I represent in this place. It will accelerate the rapid reduction in the quality of their environment and their lifestyle.

While I understand and appreciate the fact that the opposition is supporting this bill before the parliament today, in many ways I condemn it as an opportunity lost.

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