



Speech by

Barbara Stone

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (4.59 pm): I commend the minister for the important initiatives in the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 to address climate change and to refine other important legislation. In response to ongoing consultation with key stakeholders, the bill includes a suite of amendments to improve the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008, the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 in relation to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Jurisdiction Provisions) Amendment Act 2009 related amendments, and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. The Leader of the House will be very pleased to know that I intend to talk on quite a number of areas of this bill and not just on one piece of paper.

I would like to start with amendments to the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008. This introduces requirements for the microchipping of cats and dogs as a mandatory form of identification. It is a very important element of the framework for the effective management of cats and dogs within our community. We all remember back in July the story of Muffy, the long lost dog which had been missing for nine years and was able to be reunited with her owner directly as a result of her having a microchip. I see members here nodding at what a lovely story it was. More recently, there was a story of Clyde, the Tasmanian moggy, who wanted to migrate to the Sunshine State and was later found in Cloncurry. Due to his microchip, he was returned to his owners too. They are two great lovely stories.

However, key professional stakeholders have recently informed the government that vets test certain dog breeds earlier than eight weeks of age for genetic eye and hearing defects. Microchipping allows the vet to then identify a dog which may have the defect amongst a litter. Identifying the defect at an early age allows the problem to be better managed. Based on this advice, the government has acted swiftly to allow microchipping of cats and dogs at an earlier age than eight weeks.

The amendment does not affect the current legislative protection against microchipping of cats and dogs younger than eight weeks. What it does is it allows microchip implanters who are vets to exercise their professional judgement on microchipping a cat or dog younger than eight weeks. For non-vet implanters, there must be a signed vet certificate stating that the microchip is not likely to be a serious risk to the health of the animal. The amendments protect the health of very young animals while providing flexibility for professionals to make the call as to whether a cat or dog is suitable for microchipping at an earlier age than eight weeks. This is practical and flexible and a reasonable extension of the current microchipping requirements.

I now want to refer to the amendments to the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990. The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Jurisdiction Provisions) Amendment Act 2009 will confer jurisdiction on the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal to hear and determine matters under a broad range of legislation, including objections against notices under the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990.

The bill inserts new provisions in the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 to enable assessors with particular expertise, knowledge and experience to assist the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal with expert advice during proceedings to review certain notices given under the act. To me, this makes a lot of sense. The provisions also establish a process for the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal

to consider expert advice from assessors. The commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service can appoint nominated assessors each year to assist a Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal panel during particular Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 proceedings. Assessors may be nominated by the chief executive of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning for matters under the Building Act 1975 and by the chief executive of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation if the building is a licensed premises.

Assessors will not be tribunal panel members and they will not be responsible for decision making. However, the tribunal panel members may take into account any assessor's expert advice in relation to deciding questions of fact. Once again, I think this is just good common sense. This will ensure that expert knowledge continues to be available during Fire and Rescue Service Act proceedings after the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Jurisdiction Provisions) Amendment Act 2009 commences and will serve community and industry stakeholders well in ensuring robust, informed, balanced and effective tribunal proceedings.

With regard to amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the bill will also amend section 870 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 to ensure that, until particular provisions of the Local Government Act 2009 commence, a reference in the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 to the Local Government Act 2009 may be taken to be a reference to the Local Government Act 1993. Both the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and the Local Government Act 2009 have not yet commenced on a day fixed by proclamation.

The Sustainable Planning Act 2009 will also be amended to require decision notices issued by building certifiers to include approved plans for the development approval and state the classification or proposed classification of the building or parts of the building under the Building Code of Australia. It is very important that owners and the community know that buildings are compliant with the building code and the classification system matches the safety, health, amenity and sustainability features of the building to the intended use. This will provide improved accountability and greater certainty about the future intended uses for a building during the planning, development and construction of a building. It will assist building certifiers in the performance of their important auditing functions, certifying the minimum structural, fire safety, health, energy efficiency and amenity of a new building work from building development approval stage through to construction.

I now wish to speak about the abolition of the Plumbers and Drainers Board and the introduction of the Plumbing Industry Council. I know when the abolition of the board was first announced many plumbers and retired plumbers in my electorate contacted me about this decision. The Plumbers Union also raised concerns with me, and I received correspondence from the Master Plumbers. Mr Eric Rostron from Springwood, a retired plumber, spoke to me about this matter several times. In fact, he was in Parliament House talking to me when the Minister for Public Works, Robert Swarten, walked by. I immediately took the opportunity to stop him and introduce him to Eric, who was able to put forward his concerns to Minister Swarten. I thank him for listening to Eric. I believe that, along with Eric, the minister also spoke to the union about this matter.

The major concern raised with me was they were worried about the professionalism of their industry. They believed it could fall down without a body from the industry providing the necessary governance. I have to say that all the plumbers I spoke to—both those currently working and those who are retired—are very proud of their trade. They are very proud of the fact that today plumbing is becoming more technical. They have seen their trade go from general plumbing to more specialised areas, providing more scope and opportunity for plumbers. They want it to be regarded as a great trade and a trade that young people want to get into. They certainly want to see their great trade continue. I know that they are very committed to public safety and public health, and I certainly know they will welcome this news of an industry council.

With regard to the Acquisition of Land Act 1967, the amendments put forward will provide the capacity to compulsorily acquire land outside the urban footprint in the local government areas of Logan, Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Brisbane, Ipswich, Redlands and the Gold Coast for the purpose of conserving koala habitat. The primary intended use of this power is to acquire non-urban land needed for rehabilitation as koala habitat where it has not been possible to negotiate voluntary purchase or a suitable conservation agreement with landowners.

We have been very fortunate in my area of Daisy Hill and Springwood where we have had landowners negotiate very reasonably with the government and who have donated land to the Daisy Hill koala centre and forest area. I have been very pleased to see that happening in my area. I know this is just part of the strategy to increase the protection of the vulnerable south-east koala population as well as manage the growth demand in the south-east corner. My community certainly welcomes this. I want to thank the minister, while he is in the House, for visiting the Daisy Hill koala centre and forest. I know that he understands the importance of such strategies to my electorate and to the state. We look forward to having the minister back at Daisy Hill forest any time.

I want to speak briefly about a policy announced as part of the cleaner, greener buildings policy during the 2009 state election. This policy will prevent body corporates and developers from banning energy efficient building fixtures and features. Recently I had a visit from Mr Allan Cummings and Mr Allan Miller of Aramac Developments who have concerns in relation to the number of restrictive covenants being put on new developments. They believe it is stifling the building industry in the state and it is stifling affordable housing. While I appreciate this bill will not answer all of their concerns, I believe it will answer some of them.

The policy will encourage sustainable building practices and have a positive impact on housing affordability. This will be through the reduction in costs associated with floor area, surface finish and energy costs. Homeowners who may have had covenants and by-laws impact on them will be free to have more choice in design and features. For example, they will be able to choose a single garage, the number of bedrooms, whether to have an ensuite, or choose not to have a dark coloured roof.

I can remember building my first home in Springwood. I wanted a two-way bathroom with a separate vanity room instead of an ensuite. If I had an ensuite it would have meant that I would have had three bathrooms in my house. The builder kept telling me that I really needed an ensuite because everyone expects an ensuite. My words to him were, 'Are you going to come and clean it?' I was not going to be cleaning three bathrooms because there is more to life than cleaning bathrooms. I say to the women out there, 'When you are building your home do not listen to the builders. You know what you need and you know how you want it designed.' I am extremely pleased to see more choice being given to the homeowner. I commend the bill to the House.