



Speech by

Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREENTAPE REDUCTION) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BOOTHMAN (Albert—LNP) (5.52 pm): Today I stand here in support of the Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which is long overdue in Queensland. This bill is about introducing a licensing model that is proportionate to environmental risk, introducing flexible operational approvals, streamlining the approvals process for mining and petroleum, streamlining and clarifying information requirements, and achieving that while maintaining environmental outcomes. This bill is good for business and it is certainly good for employment. Once again it shows that this government is committed to building this state, building a better future for all Queenslanders and, most importantly, maintaining strong environmental safeguards in the state.

Since taking office in the electorate of Albert, I have been inundated by small and medium sized businesses requesting support through the reduction of red tape and government bureaucracy. I am pleased to state that the pleas of business are being heard by this proactive Newman government. The electorates of Albert and Coomera form the manufacturing hub of the south-east corner, and we rely on changes to environmental policy acts to better service businesses in our areas.

Our government is committed to building a four-pillar economy. This legislation has the potential to produce \$12.5 million per year in savings for business, which is surely good for business. Since its establishment, the Environmental Protection Act 1994 has become increasingly complex for business and government to administer. Furthermore, environmentally relevant activities have not been reviewed substantially since their establishment within the Environmental Protection Act 1994. By simplifying the environmental regulatory framework, we can implement a more proportionate regulatory context to ensure activities with higher environmental risk receive adequate attention. The current regulatory environment has become unnecessarily complex, time consuming and difficult to navigate.

The objectives of this bill are to create single approval processes for environmental authorities. It deletes three duplicate chapters in the Environmental Protection Act which removes 90 pages of regulation. In addition, no longer will there be a requirement to submit an additional environmental management plan as the environmental management plan has been merged into the application process. That is smart. It will save business time and money and will streamline the application process to a more logical format.

As previously stated, the creation of a regulatory framework proportionate to risk in comparison to a one-size-fits-all assessment will create efficiencies that will reduce delays in approvals and will give business certainty while maintaining strict environmental safeguards. Environmental authorisation can be applied for in three ways, based on the risk posed to the environment. The first is standard conditions, which allows business to review published eligibility criteria. This provides applicants with clarity on expectations and gives applicants the ability to ensure their businesses are situated in appropriate locations. Examples of businesses making standard applications include wood product manufacturing and screening.

Secondly, this bill allows for limited assessment changes. The bill provides for flexibility where operators cannot meet all standard conditions. Operators may apply for a variation to the application, which may alter some of the conditions. Finally, there is a site-specific application, which is a full site assessment for high-risk activities.

To further reduce red tape, the bill allows companies that hold environmental authorities at different sites to amalgamate those licences into a single environmental authority. This will create an environment of single administrative conditions and promote business investment through a simplified approach. The changes will make the process for amending environmental licences far simpler, enabling business to grow and adapt to future changes. This bill will allow each applicant to save on average \$20,000 in preparation costs and avoid 150 pages of red tape and, on average, 68 days in processing time.

After full implementation the department estimates that around half of all ERA applicants will be able to apply for a standard automatic application process. This has the potential to save 410 applicants per year additional cumbersome paperwork. Other possible green-tape reforms may include the department exploring the removal of the requirement for small business ERAs to obtain an environmental authority at all. This has possible ramifications for motor vehicle workshops, boiler makers, sheet metal and chemical storage businesses.

Once again, it proves the Newman government is proactive in helping Queensland businesses. This legislation will help businesses and residents in Albert by creating jobs. It gives applicants clear criteria on what to expect in carrying out environmentally relevant activities. This gives Albert businesses the ability to embark on proactive approaches in establishing and situating their environmentally relevant business in appropriate locations.

This Newman government is committed to building business while implementing strict environmental safeguards. It is about building jobs. It is about giving certainty to business and acting on our commitment to reduce green tape. Unfortunately, this cannot be said about our current federal Labor government and its promise to reduce red tape. With the implementation of the carbon tax, a whole new level of bureaucracy has been created, creating enormous expense for business and forcing hardworking families, singles and pensioners into uncertain futures. I commend the Hon. Andrew Powell on introducing this bill and commend it to the House for careful consideration.