



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.52 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Local Government and Other Legislation Bill (No. 2) 2015, which seeks to amend a number of acts. My comments relate to amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, which requires local governments intending to levy infrastructure charges to include a local government infrastructure plan in their planning scheme by 30 June 2016. As the honourable member for Gympie said, planning is at the very core of council's business. Regularly I hear complaints from members of my local chambers of commerce, industry groups, builders and developers of larger and smaller projects that council inaction costs them time, which costs them money, with some councils dragging the chain more than others. Frequently, concerns are raised with me about the length of time approvals take and subsequent industry frustration.

Here we have yet another example of delays that will cost jobs and growth, with the request for an extension, this time until 1 July 2018. Whilst this may be acceptable for very small regional and rural councils, today I was somewhat disappointed to learn that our Gold Coast City Council is one that has requested an extension of time to complete its local government infrastructure plan, citing current time frames as being unreasonable. Last year, all of Queensland's regional tourism organisations managed to complete their comprehensive 20-year Destination Tourism Plan with only a few months notice, yet our peak local governments cannot meet deadlines that were already extended and are requesting further extensions. Opponents of another delay state that further concessions to the local government sector without improvement in the delivery of local infrastructure are merely costly processes.

As a very proud Gold Coaster of almost 30 years, I have seen our region transform from a series of scattered suburbs to a fast-growing and vibrant city, one renowned as a premier tourism destination with an enviable climate and lifestyle. Understandably, this rapid growth and our elongated coastline landscape have placed pressures on councils to keep up with demand. However, as it is one of the largest local municipalities in Australia, it is difficult not to ask why it has not been able to comply with the time frames. The Deputy Premier mentioned the monitoring of various councils' progress in order to meet these timelines. I ask whether she is going to keep allowing extension after extension, whether there are any consequences for local governments that cannot or will not meet the deadlines and, if so, what are those consequences?

The long-awaited Gold Coast City Council draft city plan is a good example of an important document facing delay after delay. Mind you, this Labor government has not helped the process along with accusations that since its election this year the plan has been placed in go-slow mode. Despite countless requests for its gazettal, nothing has been forthcoming. Expectations of an approved plan in 2014 have been replaced with a lack of confidence by businesses in my electorate of Currumbin. The stalling of local government infrastructure plans could have a domino effect, as overdue maintenance of essential council infrastructure or replacement of mature facilities, such as the Elanora treatment plant, do not proceed as they should. Councils do not budget effectively for the replacement of those

facilities and communities, along with taxpayers, suffer as a consequence. Delays only worsen the problem.

One local councillor in division 14, the southern-most aspect of the Gold Coast and in my electorate, tried to blame the lack of capacity at the Elanora treatment plant as the reason not to encourage more development to the region. It seems that this councillor not only told stakeholders an untruth, as there is ample capacity for another 10,000 dwellings in the area, but also made no attempt to see the facility properly repaired and renovated. It is that lack of planning for the future and the maintenance of essential ageing plant facilities such as those that taxpayers on the Gold Coast have every reason to be worried about. Attitudes such as this stifle progress and dissuade developers and investors from building new projects. The neighbouring councillor in division 13, where the treatment plant is located, is no better when it comes to attracting development and improving amenities. It takes a looming election to see any action.

The new Palm Beach master plan failed to impress locals when released last month and was described as a missed opportunity by numerous businesses after a number of key issues were overlooked in favour of minor beautification works. Measures to make the streets between Fourth and Eighth avenues more attractive are welcome, but they do little to stimulate small business growth within the precinct. The Palm Beach CBD has been neglected over many years, which has allowed it to become tired and somewhat unkempt looking.

While I do appreciate considerable work and consultation went into the plan, a number of key issues that have a direct effect on the future viability of this space were not addressed. These issues include a lack of parking, both short and long term; congestion on Palm Beach Avenue which is set to worsen with the removal of exit 93 on the M1; plans to improve the visual amenity of the fencing along the Gold Coast Highway, which is a state road; and a lack of economic investment and development. Even though the state controlled Gold Coast Highway runs through the middle of this master plan, there was not any engagement with the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Palm Beach through to Coolangatta should be the thriving precinct and community with modern developments that encourage investment and create jobs. Our residents and our small businesses have suffered long enough and deserve more support.