



SEATH HOLSWICH MP – STATE MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT

1st November 2012

SURAT BASIN RAIL (INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT) BILL

I rise to speak on the Surat Basin Rail (Infrastructure Development and Management) Bill 2012 and offer some brief comments as a member of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee before whom this bill went for examination.

The policy objective of this bill as stated in the minister's explanatory notes is to create a specific legislative framework for the development and management of the Surat Basin Rail which will complement existing statutory arrangements for rail infrastructure in Queensland and protect the state's interests under the concession agreements which will govern the construction and long-term operation of the Surat Basin Rail.

As has already been acknowledged in a couple of speeches tonight, this bill follows on from the previous bill that was introduced into the last parliament but lapsed upon dissolution of the House in February this year. I note that the former bill also went through the process of departmental briefings and calling for submissions prior to lapsing and that the objectives of the bill now before the House are similar and much of the content of the previous bill is contained in this current bill. The Surat Basin Rail project is a unique project for Queensland. It is the first private rail development of its kind and it is vitally important that we get the framework for this railway right because it will set the foundation and parameters for any future private rail developments.

Of particular importance to the committee were questions raised in the submissions around the impact that this corridor will have on landholders whose properties overlap or border sections of the Surat Basin rail corridor, and I thank the Deputy Premier for his comments on these particular issues in his contribution earlier this evening. The committee noted a number of concerns that were raised, including a landowner's need to be given information about works and investigations to be undertaken on their land, the placement and/or removal of permanent structures on land adjacent to the rail corridor, the impact on a landowner's liability if chemicals or other substances are brought onto the land by a third party, and the length of notice required before a third party can enter a landowner's land. AgForce particularly covered these concerns and others in much detail in its submissions to the committee.

The committee came to the position that we outlined in recommendation 2, which the Deputy Premier has already indicated will not be adopted, but I certainly thank the Deputy Premier for addressing this recommendation and certainly appreciate the rationale that he has given in not accepting that particular recommendation. Critical to that recommendation and a number of others is the necessity of regular consultation that must be undertaken and should be undertaken with affected parties, particularly given the unique and groundbreaking nature of this project.

This need for consultation also underpins recommendation 7 and the committee noted that the Coordinator-General should take into account the impact of adjacent landowners and occupiers before any watercourse along the corridor is diverted.

I also just wanted to briefly mention recommendation 4, and again the Deputy Premier has addressed that recommendation, that the bill include a provision requiring a review of the proposed act. I certainly thank the

Deputy Premier for accepting an amended version of that recommendation so that that will be reviewed within 10 years of its commencement.

Again due to the fact that this is the first private rail project of its kind in Queensland, it is important that we get this right and that we learn very quickly from any issues that arise along this journey. This rail corridor is an important infrastructure asset for our state but could also be the first of a number of private rail projects, so regular reviews are crucial to ensure the success of both this and future projects of this nature.

The Newman government made a commitment to progress the Surat Basin Rail project in our six month action plan that we released earlier this year. That this bill has been introduced into this parliament in the early months of this government is a practical demonstration of the commitment our government has to growing Queensland's resources sector as well as a demonstration of our commitment to regional Queensland.

In closing, I want to thank the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning for its briefing and contribution to the committee's work and thank those stakeholders who participated in the process through their submissions. I also want to thank the committee secretariat and my fellow committee members for their work throughout this process. I again thank the Deputy Premier for his acceptance of many of the committee's recommendations on this piece of legislation. After the committee's scrutiny of the bill and with the recommendations of the committee being noted and many adopted, I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.