
[EXTERNAL] FW: PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BUILDING INQUIRY FURTHER SUBMISSION

From [REDACTED]
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To QPC <enquiry@qpc.qld.gov.au>

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO INTERIM REPORT

After reading the Productivity Commission Interim Report I would like to make a submission re same which I feel affects productivity in the building industry in Queensland ;

1. A review of the registration of Building Certifiers should be undertaken to ensure they have appropriate qualifications.

My experience is that, other than one who was also an Engineer, most of them appear to have little or any idea about building or construction. Yet these are the people certifying construction. In the main they seem to be box tickers who have learnt how to use the system without any significant building experience, especially on site or in design. This affects productivity, by Certifiers asking for an endless list of irrelevant and unimportant details. They have zero common sense. They are extremely highly paid for what appears to be a very low level of expertise.

2. A lot of Consultants in Brisbane are terrified of the projects they are working on being held up by Council staff if they don't agree to every Council staff request, no matter how unreasonable. This can cost Clients a lot of unnecessary money and delays. Perhaps there needs to be an independent review process to speed projects along and keep costs reasonable. I was told by a Town Planning Lawyer that Council has one but it costs \$10,000 at least, each time.

3. Multiple Brisbane City Councillors have told me, independently, that they are aware of certain anti development Council staff who are using 'legislationfare' to hold up developments deliberately. They also say they are powerless to do anything. While it's prudent to be wary of unjustifiable and potentially corrupt political interference in good decision making, some Council staff are abusing this situation for their own agenda. Councillors need a mechanism to be able to lobby heads

[REDACTED] of departments in Council for example on behalf of constituents. Otherwise, what is the point of the Councillors ?

4. I have seen examples of supposedly experienced practitioners in the timber industry designing and certifying timber framing without qualifications. When I asked to see their qualifications, they refused. The certifier accepted it because they didn't know any better.
5. Leading property commentator and an excellent source of well researched property information Michael Matusik says there is currently only 90 days of land lots available for sale in the whole of South East Queensland. Which seems extraordinary.
6. Companies holding large land holdings (land banking) should be encouraged to develop their land. Either via incentives or penalties. For example allowing owners to sit on land for no more than 5 years, or be forced to sell. Unless they can indicate it is not economic to develop the land and if it isn't, why not.
7. Make it difficult for future politicians bypassing any new productivity gains, for political expediency.
8. Councils should be compelled to approve or reject approvals within a reasonable time, or approval is granted automatically.
I was told several times by Brisbane City Council staff members while completing my subdivision in [REDACTED] that certain approvals would be completed with a certain time frame, but then Council simply ignored them all and dragged it on for nearly two years, which in the end was for no reason at all.
9. It would help to lobby Banks to provide funding for subdivisions. I came up against a lot of resistance for funding my [REDACTED] subdivision because I was developing 6 lots instead of their arbitrary maximum 5 lots for private individuals. [REDACTED]
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[REDACTED] Councils should be forced to reimburse Developers who are subjected to unreasonable delays caused by that Council and them not meeting reasonable approval times.
10. Brisbane City Council uses delaying tactics to try and force Developers in to giving them everything they want, no matter how unreasonable.

11. When querying a couple of leading Town Planning Lawyers over which takes precedence in Brisbane City Council, DA approval legislation or Tree Removal legislation (NALL), neither of them could give me an answer. They said it was a grey area and they are meant to work together. However this is how Brisbane City Council was able to hold up my subdivision for almost two years because one Council department was arguing for the supremacy of the DA and another was arguing NALL overruled everything. This needs to be cleared up for efficient processing. In my opinion you shouldn't have to apply for additional tree removal approval from Council if those trees have been approved for removal in the DA.

In my subdivision case, the Council insisted I remove 10 large gum trees on their verge so I could build them a new footpath, then the Council Department administering the NALL legislation said no you can't. This went back and forth between the departments while I could do nothing. Then when they finally said they would only approve the original DA approval I had started construction on 18 months earlier, they insisted I then pay them \$37,000 dollars to remove their trees on their land for 'canopy replacement' so I could build them their footpath. I was compensating Council for them insisting I remove their trees on their land to build them their infrastructure for free. It's absurd.

12. To make it even more unbelievable because it was taking Council so long to come up with final approval near the end of construction of the subdivision, they advised I could apply to pay a 'Minor Uncompleted Works Bond' so I could achieve plan sealing and complete sales with land buyers who had been waiting more than 12 months for their land.

I was flabbergasted to learn that I had to pay Brisbane City \$1800 just to apply, to pay an 'Uncompleted Works Bond'. Then I had to pay some \$25,000 as the actual Bond. Council then advised that when the works were completed in the next few weeks, I had to pay them an additional \$3500, just to apply to get the Bond back. In other words, even when the final minor works were completed, they would not return my Bond unless I applied to get it returned, at an exorbitant cost.

It's just revenue raising rorting by Council that adds to the price of land.

13. Getting Telstra on site to lower the Telstra cable along the verge to allow for new driveways was ridiculously difficult. I had to pay Telstra about \$28,000 in advance and then they refused to turn up for 3 months. When they did turn up on a Friday, the sub contractors started making up some excuse about it not being achievable that day which was complete nonsense. I've been a Consulting Engineer in the building industry for more than 40 years, I know nonsense on a construction site when I see it. When I asked them did they have any other jobs to go to that day seeing my job was barely a couple of hour works they said yes, the beach !

Telstra then advised it would take another couple of months to get the crew on site again and when I went further up the Telstra chain to complain, the lead contactor said why don't you dig the trench for a lower cable yourself, even tho non approved Telstra contractors aren't allowed too. So we did the following week in a couple of hours and Telstra came and dropped the new 50mm pvc pipe in the trench, which took them no more than 30 minutes. They ended up

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refunding part of my initial \$28,000 fee but it still cost more \$15,000 for a couple of hours work. Again, this inefficiency and rorting just adds to the delays and cost of land being made available to build houses on.

I thought this Interim Report of the Productivity Commission is very good. It has the potential to make a huge improvement to the building industry in Queensland. Some more advertising for more feedback from those in the industry would be very worthwhile in my opinion. Those at the coalface can see how hellish and inefficient it has become. It's the worst I've ever seen it.

The Olympics are going to be very very difficult to construct on time and on budget without significant productivity changes.

Options like banning strikes on such essential service work, like the Olympics, would help along with striking commemorative medals for those who work on the construction of same, to build pride and commitment. This should apply for workers on any state building project.

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