



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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WATER AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (9.02 pm): I rise to speak to the Water and Another Act Amendment Bill 2009. I start by suggesting a renaming of the bill. I have called it 'Son of Frankenstein'. Son of Frankenstein has become necessary because its father, Frankenstein, became such a monstrosity. Although I welcome the passing away of Frankenstein with this amendment bill, the amendments do not go far enough. I note that the aim of the bill is to reform the Water Commission in its delivery of water services. I note that the role of the Water Commission supposedly is to ensure sustainable water supplies by developing long-term water supply strategies, establishing a regional water grid, implementing water restrictions, managing water demand, providing advice to government and reforming the water industry. The intent of the bill, to simplify the poorly constructed operations of the Water Commission and to reduce wastage, is too little. In my view, the reforms contained in the bill do not go far enough. Son of Frankenstein is still too big a monster.

I wish to go on record as condemning the government's failed water policy from the inception of the Water Commission in June 2006 for its wastage, its overcharging for water, its roughshod attitude to local councils and for its contempt of local residents in delivering water services. The residents of the electorate of Cleveland and the broader Redland city continue to reject the way in which the government, via its Water Commission, has treated them. In Redlands city, water supply and security have been a high priority for successive Redland councils long before the area reached city status. Water has been like liquid gold to the people of this region and they are fiercely parochial about this precious resource. It is acknowledged that long-term drought conditions and growing populations put water resources under pressure. However, the foresight of former councils and councillors ensured that the Redlands has always had sufficient water to provide for its community.

In an article in the *Redland Times* of 25 May 2007, former Redland shire mayor Don Seccombe said that the state government taking control of dams, weirs, bulk water pipes and waste water treatment plants in South-East Queensland while councils controlled the domestic distribution system and water retail businesses was 'not good for the Redlands'. Councillor Seccombe represented the vast majority of residents in the Cleveland electorate when he stated—

... all the investment this Council has made over decades to secure water supply have been stripped from us. Redlands has planned ahead and paid for its water security over the years and now we are being penalised and will have to continue to pay to help secure water for the rest of South East Queensland.

Former chairman of the Redland Shire Council, Councillor Merv Genrich, was also incensed by the takeover of Redland water by the Water Commission. The well-managed Redland water was replaced by an inferior management system in the Water Commission. The comments by the mayor and the chairman were echoed loudly by many in the community, and the unrest about the state government's takeover continues today.

Serious environmental concerns were raised with regard to the plan to take extra water from North Stradbroke Island as the underground island aquifer may be less full than expected. There were fears that piping more water off North Stradbroke Island could turn parts of it into barren dunes and upset the delicate ecosystem. Straddie's Blue Lake's crystal waters are home to a range of native animals, including the rare

soft spined sunfish. It is also of cultural significance to local Indigenous people. As well as the council, sandmining company CRL also extracts water from North Stradbroke Island. A community reference panel was set up to look into issues affecting Straddie and a separate technical advisory panel was also involved in the investigation.

Residents have expressed concerns about the operations of the Water Commission. They are concerned about the adequacy of compensation—or inadequacy of compensation—paid to the council for water assets. The Redland City Council was ripped off by this government by at least \$30 million in the buyout of the water infrastructure. Residents are concerned about the prospect of excessive water price rises owing to the cost blow-outs of Frankenstein. Residents are concerned about the needless toughening of restrictions in the Redlands in the future.

It was evident during the recent election campaign that fluoridation and recycled water are both controversial issues within the Redlands community, and the residents of Cleveland also feel deeply that their say has been stripped away by an arrogant and domineering government. Health and safety issues surrounding both fluoridation and recycled water have not been adequately addressed by the government. What assurances can Cleveland residents expect from Son of Frankenstein in order to alleviate their concerns? The answer is none.

In conclusion, let me restate that the people of Cleveland and I are glad to see the end of Frankenstein and do not believe that the needed reforms in Son of Frankenstein go far enough. The proverbial drops of sinister sauce that this government has put in the chalice of this bill do not go far enough to pacify the monster. It appears that the people of Cleveland and South-East Queensland need a new designer, a new government, before water will be on the level.