



Speech by

## Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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### **SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND WATER (DISTRIBUTION AND RETAIL RESTRUCTURING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (8.05 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the government's South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I note that the government's bill amends 11 pieces of legislation that have already been read out so I will not read them out again.

I note that the stated aims of the legislation are: to improve regional coordination and the management of water supplies due to the reduced number of entities; to establish a more regional rather than localised basis for water and wastewater service provision, thereby refocusing the industry on more consistent customer service; to create significant economies of scale; to provide for efficiency in service provision at the distribution and retail level; to enhance customer service and improve employee skills through the amalgamation of technical skill sets and clearly focused entities; and to improve asset management and service delivery objectives through the establishment of stand-alone entities with responsibility for clearly identified elements of the supply chain.

I wish to commend the shadow minister for natural resources, mines and energy, Jeff Seeney, on his most significant contribution to the discussion of this bill and for his efforts to prosecute the government for its failure to efficiently manage our precious water resource. My contribution to the debate will have to be short due to the government's guillotining of the debate. My contribution builds on the contribution of the shadow minister and other opposition members in specific areas and local application. As such, I commend the shadow minister's speech to those desiring a more in-depth understanding of the bill.

While I support the general aims of the bill and accept that some aspects of the legislation are needed to progress South-East Queensland water management from its low level, I do so with great reservation about some parts of the bill and with the overall sense that the majority of residents of Cleveland and the broader Redlands continue to be angry about the way this government took control of what once was Redland Water and drove up the price of water in doing so.

On previous occasions I have spoken on matters pertaining to water in the Redlands. Tonight I continue to air my concerns on behalf of my electorate. I will make several points. Firstly, Redlands City is a water rich area of South-East Queensland and contributes water to the South-East Queensland water grid. 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 a growing population put water resources under pressure. However, the foresight of previous councils ensured the Redlands had sufficient water to provide for its community and to do so at a modest cost to consumers.

Secondly, Redlanders are fair-minded people and willing to share their resources. One region sharing its resources with another is understandable—whether it be water, agricultural products or mineral wealth. We are first Queenslanders after all. Thirdly, Redlanders are careful users of water as a precious commodity. Fourthly, Redlanders want to contribute to drought-proofing South-East Queensland but are tired of this government's politicising of water.

Fifthly, Redlanders are angry at the government for taking control for Redlands water from the council and for not adequately compensating them. Former mayor 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.

Residents were incensed by the takeover of Redland Water by the state government. The well-managed Redland Water has been replaced by an inferior management system, and it appears to be getting worse with the new structures in this legislation.

Sixthly and finally, Redlanders feel that the new structures may not deliver a fair share of equity for the Redlands community and as a result they fear they will pay more for their water than they otherwise would have. I continue to condemn the government for its failed management of water in South-East Queensland—for its wastage, its overcharging for water, its roughshod attitude to the local councils and its contempt of local residents in the delivery of water services.