



Speech by

## Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Thursday, 25 November 2010

---

### WATER AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

**Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (11.47 am): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the government's Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 on behalf of the people of the Cleveland electorate. I note that the objective of the government's bill is to amend various pieces of legislation. It is to amend the Energy Ombudsman Act 2006, to amend the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009, to make additional amendments to the D-R Act and Water Act 2000, to amend the Land Valuation Act 2010, to amend the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997, to update and enhance the existing processes under part 5A of the QCA Act, to amend the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945, to introduce regulatory frameworks to improve the management of impacts arising from the extraction of underground water from petroleum activities, including coal seam gas activities, to amend the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 and to amend the Wild Rivers Act 2005. I note that the bill addresses a number of important issues, of which three particularly stand out: groundwater issues concerned with the coal seam gas industry, the water distributor-retailers entities in South-East Queensland and the wild rivers legislation.

I wish to commend the shadow minister for natural resources, mines and energy, Jeff Seeney, for his most useful contribution to the debate and particularly for his efforts to expose the government for its many failures with respect to water management and the wild rivers legislation. My contribution attempts to build on the contribution of the shadow minister and other opposition members, with a focus on the two issues of South-East Queensland water management and, to a lesser extent, wild rivers legislation. For a greater treatise of all aspects of the legislation I commend the shadow minister's speech.

With regard to South-East Queensland water management, the majority of residents of Cleveland and the broader Redlands continue to be angry about the way this government mismanages water in South-East Queensland and particularly that it is at the expense of ratepayers. The people of Cleveland and the broader Redlands do not accept that they should pay, through their water rates, for the \$9 billion water grid—a dysfunctional desalination plant, the Traveston Dam farce, pipelines going to nowhere and fat-cat bureaucrats. The residents of the Cleveland electorate are incensed by the extreme levels of waste, mismanagement and blame-shifting that continue to be the pattern of this failed Labor government. Instead of owning up to its failures and fixing the problems, this government has unsuccessfully tried to blame councils, and now through this bill the government attempts to shift the blame for water pricing to another scapegoat, the QCA.

I make the following points in terms of local Redland perspectives to provide a contextualised understanding about water. First, Redland City is a water-rich area of South-East Queensland and contributes water to the South-East Queensland grid. Water supply and security have been high priorities for successive Redland councils, long before the area reached city status. The foresight of former councils and councillors ensured that the Redlands has always had sufficient water to provide for its community. Secondly, Redland residents are fiercely parochial with this resource. Thirdly, Redlanders are careful users of water, the precious commodity that it is.

Fourthly, Redlanders are understandably angry at the government for taking control of Redland Water from the council and for not adequately compensating them. The state government took over the Redlands water infrastructure that was valued at approximately \$130 million for approximately \$80 million. Former mayor Councillor Don Secombe represented the strong and persistent feeling among the people of Cleveland and the broader Redlands when he said—

All the investment this council has made over decades to secure water supply has 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 mayor's comments were echoed loudly by many in the community, and the unrest about the state government's takeover continues to this day. The well-managed Redland Water has been replaced by an inferior management system.

Fifthly, Redlanders feel that the new structure, Allconnex, does not deliver a fair share of equity—only 10 per cent—for the Redlands community and, as a result, they will pay more for their water than they otherwise would have. It is estimated that the Redlands will be one of the regions that is hardest hit, with the bulk water price expected to double over the next seven years. I continue to condemn the government for its failed management of water in South-East Queensland, particularly Cleveland and the broader Redlands, that has caused a major increase in water prices, with further massive increases to follow.

The second main area I wish to address is the Wild Rivers Act and the provisions in this bill that seek to amend this act with respect to the declaration of the rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin as wild rivers. The wild rivers legislation has little to do with protecting the rivers of the Lake Eyre Basin, with water quality issues of the rivers or with any other real environmental outcome and a lot to do with appearances and preference deals with the extreme left of politics in Queensland—

**Mr Dick:** A line written by the party office and you're just repeating it.

**Dr ROBINSON:** I wrote it myself.

**Mr Robertson:** That's nothing to be proud of. I would've stuck with the party line.

**Dr ROBINSON:** I am very happy for the minister to find where I have taken that from and not given credit.

**Mr Dick:** The member for Callide said it last night.

**Dr ROBINSON:** They do not like that. It is a lot to do with appearances and preference deals with the extreme left of politics in Queensland so that the inner-city latte-sipping, low-primary-vote-earning Labor MPs can be returned to the parliament at the next election. That is why wild rivers legislation exists and that is what it is really about. It has nothing to do with protecting any real environmental values and is in fact a cynical sellout of the rights of Indigenous Australians for extreme left Greens preferences. It is all about cynical political deals that trample over Indigenous rights for a political outcome. In effect, the government has transferred control of the Lake Eyre Basin from the rightful Indigenous custodians to the inner-city Greens—a very inappropriate transaction.

Under the pretext of improving the environment around the rivers, the government has robbed Indigenous Australians of a range of opportunities in the use of that land. To achieve this, the government has pitted Indigenous Australian against Indigenous Australian, and it has effectively used a divide-and-conquer strategy that pits elder against elder and community members against each other. Indigenous leaders such as Noel Pearson have rightly come out against the government's wild rivers legislation. In so doing, this government violates Indigenous rights to placate their Far Left mates in seats like Ashgrove and Mount Coot-tha, because these members could not win the next election in a fair shoot-out against the LNP candidates. Is it any wonder the sustainability minister is a champion of this piece of legislation? She will not likely be returned to this House at the next election without the Far Left Greens preferences that she has been aiming for.

North Stradbroke Island is part of my electorate. Unfortunately, the approach that this government has used to strip land from the Indigenous people of the Lake Eyre Basin in the wild rivers legislation is being repeated on North Stradbroke Island through the current Indigenous land use agreement process that the government is following. The government cared little about the Quandamooka people and more about getting control of the land under native title claim to lock it away in its mad rush to turn 7.5 per cent of Queensland into unmanaged national parks. Why? All for the sake of Greens preferences at the next election.

Quandamooka elders, like elders in the Lake Eyre Basin, are being pitted against each other, and many of them are starting to speak out against the government and the Premier's plan. I make this comparison as both wild rivers legislation and the North Stradbroke Island case illustrate the disgraceful

way that this government treats Indigenous Queenslanders and why I do not support the way it has conducted itself via the wild rivers legislation.

The *Stradbroke Island News* spring edition is revealing about the way this government treats Indigenous Queenslanders. The latest article states—

Elder annoyed by lack of talk

Respected Indigenous elder Auntie Margaret Iselin says she is annoyed with Premier Anna Bligh's plans to turn 80 per cent of North Stradbroke Island into a national park, stating lack of consultation—

lack of consultation—

before the landmark decision was made public.

She said—

Wouldn't you be upset if that was announced here on the island and the rest of the community did not know anything about it, especially the elders?

What a terrible way to treat our Indigenous elders and our Indigenous people. We see it in the wild rivers legislation. We see this pattern in the way Labor treats Indigenous Queenslanders. Auntie Margaret goes on to say—

There's been no sign of this promised joint management.

There is no sign of joint management—not visible, not there. She says—

It was a hasty decision, announcing it without consulting the rest of the community, the people of Stradbroke who live here. There should have been a large community meeting for people to decide what they want.

That would have been the proper way—to consult the people first, to get the elders together first, to get the Indigenous people together first. We see this pattern in the way Labor deals with Indigenous Queenslanders. We see it in the wild rivers legislation, and unfortunately it appears to be coming to North Stradbroke Island soon. The Quandamooka people are incensed by it.

There is another article about the island headed 'Bligh mutiny at the polls'. There was a 15 per cent swing in the booth at Dunwich, which is the booth most represented by Indigenous people of the island and miners on the island. It is very obvious why there would be a huge swing against the current Labor government. Why? For the way that it treats Indigenous people and for the way that it treats miners and workers, hardworking men. Many of the jobs that are going to be lost, or cut, are jobs for Indigenous people. That is how this government treats and rewards Indigenous people in this nation. It is a disgrace. It is disgusting. The elders and Indigenous community do not want the Premier's will imposed on them, as is happening.

**A government member:** How do you know?

**Dr ROBINSON:** Because I speak to them on a regular basis and they tell me they are very unhappy. The vast majority—

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Dr ROBINSON:** I am talking about Stradbroke Island. Keep up with it, Murray. I know it is hard. They do not want to be treated in the same way that the government has treated the people of the Lake Eyre Basin in the wild rivers legislation. They want a fair say in their future, a say that they are not yet receiving. The Premier appears to be pushing ahead, however, with her divide and conquer plan, just as she has done with the wild rivers legislation. In contrast to this government, the Liberal National Party is a party which supports land rights for our Indigenous communities. I call on the Quandamooka elders and community to not be bullied into submission by this arrogant Labor Premier and government. If we are fortunate, Labor will not be in government for much longer.

In conclusion, the government has been tried and found guilty in the court of public opinion for mismanaging water in South-East Queensland. As a result, water prices are rapidly rising. Further, the government's wild rivers amendments do not remove the injustice it imposes on the Indigenous people of the Lake Eyre Basin that robs them of opportunities to use their land.