



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Tuesday, 14 February 2012

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

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (5.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I will limit my contribution to matters that are particularly important to the Redlands community and my electorate of Cleveland within that broader community. So I intend to make only a short contribution. I also acknowledge my fellow colleague in the Redlands, Peter Dowling, the member for Redlands and commend him for his contribution in representing the people of the Redlands. I certainly also commend to those from the Redlands his speech to read.

The return of the distribution and retail aspects of water to the councils is something that I and the member for Redlands have called for for some time. We are on the public record here in the parliament and also in our area calling for that to take place. In regard to some aspects of this bill I am glad to say that at least community pressure and the LNP opposition have finally made some impact on the government to the point at which it has put forward a plan that begins to provide some good direction for water policy for the future. Finally, some common sense is coming through.

Returning water management to councils was one of the four key points that Campbell Newman presented some time ago in his four-point water plan for South-East Queensland. Although I know others have mentioned that four-point plan, without being repetitive I will summarise them briefly. Point 1 is the amalgamation of the water entities. That amalgamation will certainly be of practical benefit. Point 2 is handing back water retail and distribution to the councils. Again, that is an important point in this bill for the people of Redlands. Point 3 is writing off non-performing water assets. Point 4 is adopting a longer term, or 40-year price path. That in itself will turn out to be significant. All of those points together will ultimately produce cheaper water and place downward pressure on water prices. I commend to the House and to the Redland community that four-point plan and note that, in that regard, this bill attempts to follow the lead of Campbell Newman.

This bill begins to fix Labor's water mess. Issues such as the expensive water grid have cost the people of South-East Queensland in the form of the price they are paying for their water. Issues such as the Traveston Dam and the Tugun desalination plant have added to the price that Redlanders and the good people of Cleveland are paying for water.

To understand the importance locally of water to the Redlands community and the electorate of Cleveland, which includes North Stradbroke Island, and runs from Wellington Point down to Thornlands, Redlands has always had cheap water. While water was managed by the local council, the price of the water has always been cheap. In that regard Redlanders feel firstly a little bit spoilt that we have always had that but terribly ripped off that under management of this Labor government over the last several years the price of water has skyrocketed. That was something that Redlanders made very clear at the last election. It was something they were very angry at and that anger was aimed at this government. That anger is still simmering today in the Redlands. It is my hope that the people of Cleveland and the Redlands will again let it be known to this government their anger and disappointment over the mismanagement of

South-East Queensland's water, particularly that of the Redlands. They will no doubt, as educated and aware as they are, know that this measure today is as a result of the lobbying of not only the community but also the opposition to bring it back to the way that it should have been.

We have always had cheap water in the Redlands. We have planned and managed that asset very well. A series of local councils, of mayors and councillors over a long period of time, have planned for the water needs of the Redlands and managed the asset very well to keep the price cheap. They planned dams like the Leslie Harrison Dam, they also planned around the use of water from the North Stradbroke Island aquifer. All of that has been done in a self-sustainable way. Redlanders are very proud of what they have achieved with their water management over a long period of time. They have been completely disgusted over the last several years in the way that this government has mishandled water which has resulted in a jacking up of the prices they are paying.

As someone who has been in the Redlands now for 10 years as of March, I can remember those low water bills. I can remember what it was like to pay a very small price for water, then in more recent years to see how expensive my water bill has become. When we consider the infrastructure planning in the Redlands by the council, it was second to none anywhere else in the state, I would suggest—with a little bit of local bias. It was great water infrastructure planning, a great example to this failed state government of planning and delivery and doing it at a modest price. This government could learn a lot from past Redland councils about how to handle and manage water. It is a pity that it took the management off them. It has now caused it to be handed back at a much higher price.

I support the sections in this legislation that start to get water back on the right track for the Redlands. Redlands residents have welcomed already the news that the LNP is supporting this bill in these aspects. Council is looking forward to being once again able to control its own destiny. Councillors are looking forward to controlling the destiny of some aspects of their water once again and hopefully being able to bring downward pressure on the price of water. Should the LNP form government, our policies will help to drive down the price. One of the points in Campbell Newman's four-point plan that I have already outlined is being adopted in this legislation today. Government members do not like to acknowledge that again they are following the leader. They have nothing left to offer except slander and sleaze. It is my hope that at the next election the people of Queensland tell this government loud and clear about its failure.

We see in the Redlands that water has been cheap. We see that it was well planned, well managed and self-sustaining until this government interfered. It has interfered and made muck up upon muck up that the people of the Redlands are paying for. It is an absolute disgrace. People today are paying for Labor's failure to plan and deliver all over this state. At the last election the people of Cleveland let them know and I encourage them to let them know again.

This long-term Labor government's policies on water have driven up costs. People are now paying the high price of water. It also has driven up the cost of electricity and car and boat registration. Boat registration has gone up 100 per cent in four years in some categories. Anything under the management of this government blows out of control in terms of the pricing. We see it in the price of petrol. Labor's policies are expensive.

In conclusion, should the LNP form government it will deliver cheaper water prices for all of the Redlands. I ask the people of Cleveland to let this government know what they think at the next election.