



Speech By
Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Record of Proceedings, 9 November 2016

**WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
(UNDERGROUND WATER MANAGEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (8.30 pm): I rise to speak to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and, to a lesser degree, the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I note that the stated aims of the legislation are to—

- align Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014 provisions with Government policy and election commitments
- ensure provisions for water planning instruments appropriately transition existing instruments and processes into the new water planning framework and that the new framework can operate effectively.

In 2014 the former LNP government pursued reform of the Water Act to reduce red tape and encourage economic development opportunities using water resources, particularly in regional Queensland. The key reforms included to remove the ideologically driven ecologically sustainable development, or ESD, component and insert a broader purpose to the act to consider community and economic outcomes as well as the environment; to update unnecessary, long and rigid water planning processes; to provide consistency in how groundwater is managed across all resource industry sectors; and to create a pathway for the consideration of new large-scale water infrastructure projects, known as the water development option. These reforms were passed in late 2014. Since forming government, Labor has delayed these reforms and only in late 2015 did it introduce its own bill.

I note that the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee was not able to reach a majority decision on whether the bill before us tonight should be passed. The only recommendation from the committee states—

The committee recommends the Department of Natural Resources and Mines continues to investigate alternatives for securing water for large scale projects while taking into account the impact on communities.

I turn now to make the following points in terms of a Cleveland or Redlands perspective with regard to this bill to provide some local understanding about water reform. On many occasions I have brought the views of my electorate to this House about water management and water reform. Labor has been responsible for and known for poor water management across the Redlands for many years. I went on the record in my first year as a member of parliament condemning the then Labor government on its failed water policies of the time and how they impacted on the Redlands. My electorate of Cleveland and the broader Redlands has always been a water rich area in South-East Queensland. It was the foresight of local councils that implemented a sustainable water management system for the Redlands. Water supply and water security were a high priority for these former local councils long before the Redlands shire became known by its city status. There was plenty of water to provide the community in spite of long-term drought conditions and a growing population. This was all achieved with moderate cost to local consumers. It is called good planning.

The former Labor state government's disastrous takeover of the well managed Redlands Water is well documented. Labor took away the water rights of the Redlands, made poor decisions about water infrastructure and provided inadequate compensation for the assets it acquired. In a speech I delivered to the House in 2009 on the Water and Another Act Amendment Bill, I quoted former Redlands shire mayor Don Seccombe. In the *Redland Times* of May 2007 Don Seccombe stated—

... 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'.

He went on further to state—

... 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.

The hard work and planning of the Redlands council—

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I was just following the bill and I do not believe there is any relevance to the bill we are actually discussing tonight.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! No, there is no point of order.

Dr ROBINSON: Only the LNP had a plan to ensure that all Queenslanders would benefit from responsible water management and that there was an appropriate balance in water management in terms of balancing the economic, social and environmental issues, which are some of the important aspects or broadly underpinning aspects of this bill. I also noted in the House in 2010 that Labor's failed water management policy created a shortfall of an estimated \$300 million as a result of the devaluing of Redlands water assets and that the final result of these water management policies was the price hike of water rates in Redlands city. Redlands now pays massive water rates costs compared to what used to be our cheaper water supply. The bill before the House today under Labor's management provides little hope for improving local water management.

Since 2009 I have expressed serious environmental concerns about Labor's decision at the time to take extra water from the North Stradbroke Island underground water aquifer and I note that that was an underground water aquifer that was under pressure from the mine, even though the mine has managed that water use well over the years, but also the increasing drawing of that water supply by the Redlands community and now broadly the South-East Queensland community. It is very important that that North Stradbroke Island aquifer be carefully managed and I was very happy to be part of the LNP government that implemented safeguards to protect that water resource. We managed the water usage of the aquifer in a sustainable manner and we put in place safeguards to make sure excess water was not readily taken from that source and only by a strict application and approval process could additional water be taken from that Straddie aquifer. That was something very important that a number of the local green environmental groups had been calling on for some time.

Another local water supply issue in the Redlands that is relevant to the bills is the management of the Leslie Harrison Dam. As a part of scheduled maintenance, the gate of the dam was removed—it was only meant to be for a short time while maintenance occurred—but now we learn that there is no plan from Seqwater to put the gates back on. Today we see the Tingalpa bridge area of the dam near Broadwater Road dry.

Dr LYNHAM: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Again, the member is drifting well and truly away from relevance to this bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Cleveland, I ask you to come back to the relevance of the bill before the House.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I have tried to make the point, it is very important in terms of how we handle the underground water—the aquifer—on North Stradbroke Island and what we do in terms of water reform in the Redlands. We have had another issue that has come about, and I am talking about local applications of water reform and management. It has been part of the history of the development of this bill in a number of pieces of legislation over the last seven years.

Mr Power interjected.

Dr ROBINSON: I note the interjections from the member for Logan, who continues to make frivolous interjections. I make the point that the member was not here in the parliament during previous debates about water reform and water management.

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is now explicitly making points about bills over the past seven years, not the bill at hand.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Cleveland, once again I will bring you back to the relevance of the bill.

Dr ROBINSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your guidance. I was taking an interjection from the member for Logan. The member for Logan likes to dish out frivolous points of order, but then when you take an interjection—

Mr BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cleveland, take your seat. There is a point of order.

Dr ROBINSON: Really?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cleveland, for the disrespect to the chair that you have shown, you are now warned under standing order 253A.

Mr BROWN: My point of order was that the member made two reflections on the chair.

Dr ROBINSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I certainly apologise to the chair. It was not my intention to in any way imply anything of the chair, but the very fact that there continues to be this frivolous interjection from those opposite, I am happy to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cleveland, we are discussing the two bills before us. Please go back to the relevance of the two bills. Ignore the interjections.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you. The former LNP government dealt with the North Stradbroke Island aquifer and its importance to mining. It was important water reform. This legislation tracks back many years to previous acts. It is part of the history of why we have what we have today. I make those relevant points.

It is interesting to note that, today, it has taken the former member for Capalaba Jim Elder to raise issues about the risk of asbestos in our water supply. The government has not been able to handle those questions.

(Time expired)