

Roadvale 4310

Phone: [REDACTED]

18 March 2019

Committee Secretary  
State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

Submission – Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

Chapter 6 Amendments of water legislation – Part 3 Amendment of Water Act 2000.

We are long term ratepayers of the Roadvale Water Board. We wish to place the following concerns before the Committee about the proposed changes to the Water Act 2000 concerning Category II Water Boards and the State Government's objective to achieve 50% gender equity by 2020.

**Concern 1: Optionality of electoral process.**

We, along with other ratepayers and petitioners have placed numerous concerns before the Minister and the Department in the drafting of this new legislation. We have noted that the Department and the Minister has made a limited response to the feedback and altered the proposal accordingly. However, the current proposal while not completely removing the electoral process downgrades the electoral process to an "optional" process – reduced to the procedures rather maintaining it, in the legislation.

**Concern 2: Increased Ministerial powers and emphasis on selection process will divert attention from the cost-effective water delivery.**

No Water Board can contain all the skills required to address every issue it may face. However, the ratepayers from Roadvale have shown the capacity, using an electoral process, on two separate occasions in the last 30 years to elect new Directors who considerably improved the service when its Board was found to be ineffective. The proposed increase in Ministerial power to select 4 from 6 nominees and to divert Board resources into a selection criteria process and candidate location will shift focus from effective water delivery. Over the longer term, it may cost the Government more to manage the facility, but what is certain is, it will cost ratepayers more.

Essentially it shifts the function of the Water Board away from its sole/main purpose of service delivery and requires the Board focus on the demands of Government.

**Concern 4: The Timing.**

It is noted that the Government has promoted the 50/50 gender equity objective since its election in 2015. The Roadvale Water Board was elected in 2016 and as a small organisation deserves time to achieve the objective. No new elections have been held since the consolidation of this policy platform and its' implementation. We are aware that the current Board has expressed its willingness to achieve the objective with the elections that are due now. The community through its Board should be given time to achieve the objective BEFORE punitive and unnecessary changes to legislations are implemented.

**Concern 5: Combining Gender Equity goals with modernisation of the selection and appointment process.**

As Roadvale Water Board ratepayers, we have long sensed a desire of Government (eg the Webbe-Weller Review) to change the nature of Category II Water Boards. There has been no meaningful evidence presented as to the need for this change. The loose use of words such as 'modernisation' and 'standardisation' is the latest ill-thought out idea to fundamentally change the nature of Category II water authorities. To imply the service is not 'modern' denigrates the hard work completed by the ratepayers and the Board. For instance, the Roadvale Water Board has achieved one of the lowest water loss percentages above those achieved by many other services. The Water Board has employed a female engineer, a female secretary and has had a female Board Director. These are positive advances in the last 20 years.

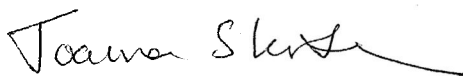
The Department has provided no information on the goals of the 'modernisation' process and nor how, once implemented the 'modernisation' will be measured to determine its success or otherwise. Nor are options for remedy offered.

The community through its Water Board has shown that it is highly capable of providing an excellent and ESSENTIAL non-potable water scheme to its local community.

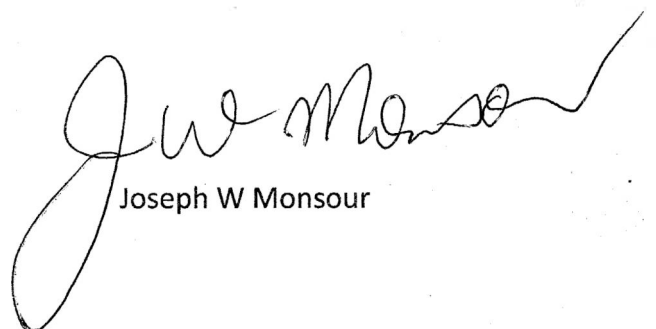
We are confident that the Water Board and the ratepayers will strive to meet the requirement of governments 50/50 gender equity platform.

That said, we remain deeply concerned that removing the community's ability to change the Board in line with its requirement for cost effective water provision should not be over ridden by the possibilities inherent in ill considered changes to the current legislation.

Yours sincerely



Joanna S Kesteven



Joseph W Monsour