



Speech by

KERRY SHINE

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Hansard 7 November 2001

WATER AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (10.41 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of this bill. The amendments proposed to the Water Act have come about as a result of internal review of the operation of the Water Act and extensive consultation with key stakeholder groups. Importantly, the changes will expedite the implementation of a secure water supply for irrigators and the flexibility to trade water that will go with it.

I would like to focus on two positive changes that the amendments will bring about. Firstly, they will allow a resource operations licence to be granted to Fitzroy River Water, a commercial arm of the Fitzroy Shire Council, under the resource operations plan for that basin. The licence will be able to be granted without the need to first issue an interim licence, cutting through the red tape associated with that interim process. It will also allow water trading to be implemented in the Fitzroy Basin sooner than would otherwise happen. Secondly, the changes will allow resource operations plans to be prepared concurrently with water resource plans. For example, in the Condamine-Balonne preparation of the resource operations plan for the basin will commence before the water resource plan has been completed. Again, this will speed up the whole water planning process, ensuring people have secure water allocations far sooner.

As in the Fitzroy Basin, the amendments will allow water trading to commence sooner rather than later. The Beattie government acknowledges the uncertainty felt by water users as a result of the water planning process. The government is committed to ending that uncertainty by securing water allocations for irrigators as soon as possible at the same time as addressing the environmental needs of the river systems they rely on. These are just a few of the improvements being made to the water reform process by this government and they demonstrate our commitment to continually reviewing water reform processes with a view to making ongoing improvements in close consultation with stakeholders.

Water is our most precious natural resource and as a community we need to get value out of every drop that we use. The Water Act 2000 provides us with the framework to achieve our water reform goals and desired environmental outcomes. However, it is of course a moving feast. We need to constantly review and scrutinise our legislation and policies to ensure that they achieve the best outcomes possible socially, environmentally and economically from time to time.

Queensland's water resource planning process is still acknowledged as the best in Australia. That is because our approach has been one of ongoing improvement and scrutiny on the basis of lessons learnt during the development of each water resource plan and on the basis of new technology, science and research. There will always be room for improvement with the assistance of the community and stakeholders.

Public consultation remains a cornerstone, however, to water reform undertaken by the Beattie government. The government, I believe, will continue to work with the community to ensure that the best outcomes for Queensland are achieved now and into the future. These amendments are proof of that commitment of the government and, accordingly, I am pleased to support the bill and I commend it to the House.
