



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (6.35 p.m.): The Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 continues the significant environmental reforms by the Beattie Labor government. The proposed amendments are a further indication of the government's ongoing commitment to work with local authorities and businesses to secure better environmental outcomes for Queensland. I am led to believe that the EPA has undertaken extensive consultation with local government, business and community stakeholders to achieve a mutually agreed policy position on the contents of this bill.

Since its establishment in 1999 under the Beattie Labor government, the Environmental Protection Agency has made real progress in addressing the sustainable use of Queensland's natural capital and the preservation of areas of natural and cultural significance. Our environment is important. We have only one planet and we must do all we can to preserve it. It is critical, therefore, for the future of our children, our children's children and, indeed, their children that we work to ensure that everyone is aware of sustainable practices. It has become a crucial part of our government's focus, achieving real and lasting environmental outcomes for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

I applaud the minister. I also applaud the Environmental Protection Agency for its promotion of water conservation, water-use efficiency and water recycling in our cities and towns by developing and promoting WaterWise—a world-leading urban water-use efficiency and demand management program—to local governments and schools; participating in national programs to promote the uptake of water-use efficient appliances; supporting local governments to implement programs that encourage the uptake of water-use efficient appliances such as the shower rose subsidy scheme in the Bundaberg-Burnett region; demonstrating, in partnership with several local governments, the benefits of effective leakage control and pressure management in water reticulation networks; working with developers and local governments to introduce more sustainable water-use practices in the design and construction of urban communities such as the Agnes Water development; and encouraging, through the Queensland Water Recycling Strategy, appropriate water recycling as a substitution to save drinking water as part of an integrated water management approach.

The Beattie state government is currently developing guidelines to enable people to use recycled water safely and effectively and to install and use rainwater tanks. To assist in the development of the rainwater guidelines, the EPA is involved in a joint project with the Brisbane City Council to conduct trials on retrofitting rainwater tanks in high density inner suburbs, and in a joint study with the Maroochy Shire Council to identify the benefits of and barriers to their existing rainwater tank subsidy scheme. Rainwater tanks are another issue which is constantly raised in this House and in the community. I think it is a positive step forward to look at bringing them back because they are an efficient way of utilising our water resources.

Positive educational concepts include the fact that WaterWise has been presented to over 70 local governments and over half a million schoolchildren. Queenslanders are already reaping its benefits through significant reductions in water consumption in numerous cities and towns over the last five years. Queenslanders are already installing water-use efficient appliances and their uptake will

continue to grow in the future. The demonstration of the benefits of effective leakage control and pressure management in water reticulation networks has encouraged other local governments to adopt the same approach. Guidelines for the agricultural use of municipal effluent, the results of the two rainwater projects, and guidelines for the installation and use of rainwater tanks will be available in the coming months.

The Sunshine Coast is very interested in the state government's Queensland Water Recycling Strategy which encourages the use of rainwater tanks. Rainwater tanks in urban communities can reduce the damage caused to local streams from stormwater during small to medium storms by reflecting the natural rainfall run-off response. Water supply planning studies have also indicated that a significant uptake of rainwater tanks has the potential to defer major capital infrastructure such as the building of dams and associated treatment plants.

By no means is this government changing all the processes that apply to environmental authorities. The existing system has many valuable and effective elements and these are being retained. The Environmental Protection Act already contains a core regulatory framework for dealing with the environmental objectives of the bill. The proposed amendments will complement, enhance and strengthen existing process and enforcement provisions to achieve greater initiatives and environmental outcomes for the EPA and its clients.

This bill will also provide improved protection for the environment, greater certainty for businesses to invest and to provide jobs, improved access to information and greater involvement and confidence in the community. I am confident that the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will reduce the burden of legislation for the EPA, local governments and businesses alike. I am also confident that the bill will not have an adverse impact on rural or regional Queensland. I also expect that the savings generated by businesses as a result of increased efficiencies in how environmental authorities are dealt with by the bill will have a very positive impact on employment. I therefore commend the bill to the House.