



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

---

Hansard 15 October 2003

#### **WATER LICENCE TAX**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.08 a.m.): Once again today we have seen the absolute hypocrisy of the members of the Beattie Labor government in this House as they have tried to beat up a story about a non-existent tax that the coalition was supposedly planning to introduce. At the same time irrigators across the state are currently receiving their first batch of water bills for the \$250 tax for each water licence that they hold. That is \$250 to renew a water licence that most people have held for many years.

We are seeing the introduction of this new Beattie Labor government tax at a time when members in this House are trying to create issues about other taxes. Just like Labor's unfair and inequitable ambulance tax, this tax will hit some people many times depending on how many water licences they hold. It is another case of this Beattie government double-dipping at every opportunity with its hand in taxpayers' pockets for a new tax that simply does not produce any increase in services available to the people who pay it. It is simply a money grab. At the time the new tax was introduced into state parliament we in the coalition moved a disallowance motion to disallow the regulation that would introduce this tax, but Labor used its massive parliamentary majority to force through the new tax in this parliament. Every one of those members who have made snide references about new taxes today voted in favour of this tax.

Now, farmers across Queensland are being sent bills for \$250 simply to renew a water licence that they have held for many years. Unlike Labor, the coalition is prepared to minimise the impact of this tax. The mechanism to do that already exists, although when the water users get their \$250 bill in the mail the department does not tell them of the mechanism that is available to reduce the impacts of this new tax. Section 1055(2) of the Water Act allows water users to amalgamate water licences so that the water tax is only levied once on each property or once on each group of amalgamated licences. But the department does not make that clear. It sends a bill in the mail with forms to fill in requiring a whole lot of information, but there is no attempt to make known to the people who are being asked to pay that tax that a mechanism exists for them to reduce the amount that they have to pay.

We will ensure that property owners pay this inequitable tax only once. We will ensure that, like the unfair and inequitable Beattie government's ambulance tax, this tax will be levied once only on property owners. Surely \$250 per property is enough to cover any cost of renewing water licences. But this tax was never intended to have a relativity with the cost of renewing water licences. It was simply a money grab from a government that is broke.