



Speech by

TREVOR STRONG

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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WATER AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (6.07 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the bill tonight. It contains a couple of amendments that are very necessary to my constituents and the people of the Burnett region, which I would like to touch on, because they resolve issues that arose during the final stage of developing the resource operations plan for the Burnett catchment.

This bill contains a number of amendments that have been developed in response to issues that arose out of the Burnett catchment's water resource plan—or ROP. One of the amendments contained in this bill will allow a reservation of allocated water for the proposed Barlil weir project in the final Burnett ROP and allow for changes to an existing resource operations licence to include the Barlil weir project. Around 4,200 megalitres of unallocated water will be reserved in the ROP for this weir. This was a factor that was identified in the public review of the environmental factors for the project and is also in line with the objectives of the water resource plan.

Honourable members will be aware that the water resource plan is developed before a resource operations plan and sets out the objectives for the water system. The ROP deals with the practical implementation of those objectives. All of the proposed amendments of the Burnett catchment's water resource plan are consistent with the objectives of the plan and do not adversely affect any of its environmental aims.

This weir will deliver major benefits not only to the people of my region but also to people throughout the entire South Burnett. It will provide a reliable source of water for the diverse agricultural, horticultural, industrial and urban uses throughout the area. This supply will supplement existing supplies, which are not always reliable. It will also increase the yield of the system supplying the Barker-Barambah irrigation project. The Bjelke-Petersen Dam on Barker Creek is fully allocated and cannot be relied on to satisfy the existing requirements in every year. Additional water supplies and improved reliability will allow increased diversity of agricultural production in this scheme and deliver improved financial security to land-holders in the area.

The Beattie government made a promise to build a dam on the Burnett River. This bill provides further proof that this government is delivering on its promises. In 2001 the government established Burnett Water Pty Ltd to develop better water supplies for the Burnett region. I commend the directors of Burnett Water, Mike Montefiori and Rowena McNally, for their application to the task. They have generated an enormous amount of credibility in the project and have gained a tremendous amount of respect as a result of the way they operate their business and the way they are pushing forward with this project.

One of the corporation's principal goals was to coordinate the proposed dam in the Burnett Basin, the only major water infrastructure project in the country at this time. An impact assessment for this project has supported the proposed dam, which will deliver benefits to my constituents and contribute to the future development of the region.

A number of amendments have been developed to allow this project to be completed. One amendment relates to landowner consent for development on land which has been the subject of a community infrastructure designation under the Integrated Planning Act 1997. This House has already amended the IPA to remove the requirement for landowner consent, but these amendments have not yet commenced. This bill brings forward commencement of these provisions so that development of the Burnett Water infrastructure project occurs consistently with the objectives of the IPA. These transitional

provisions will apply only until the owner consent provisions in the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2001 commence.

A further issue that has arisen out of consultations with the Burnett community relates to how land that may be inundated by one-in-100-year floods should be managed. It is important to ensure that the appropriate storage of water does not come at the expense of the rights of the land-holders at the tail waters. Previously, land that is temporarily inundated but could otherwise continue in its present use would have been acquired by the government or dam operator to extend the land that is controlled for the purposes of the dam. This historical approach is not appropriate for land at the top of the storage area of the dam, because this land is not flooded frequently and even then the inundation is only short term.

Currently the Land Act and Land Title Act allow an easement for water storage to be created on inundated land that is behind the weir. These amendments extend those provisions to allow the creation of public utility easements for the purposes of temporary water storage. We are talking about temporary water storage in certain limited circumstances. These circumstances are where there is a flood event that requires the temporary storage of water on land outside the storage area of the dam when it is operating at full supply level. These amendments to the Land Act and Land Title Act respond to the preference expressed by land-holders that inundated land not be acquired but rather that easements be created to allow the storage of valuable floodwater.

These provisions are an excellent example of the government's commitment to community consultation and to the protection of individuals' rights in the context of major infrastructure development projects. The amendments in this bill are due to the water resource and resource operations planning processes in the Burnett Basin and will improve the water management framework and the levels and standards of water service provision to my constituents and all those of the Burnett region.

I cannot stress enough that the long-term sustainable management of water is vital to the future of the Burnett community because of its importance to local businesses, agriculture and industry as a whole. I support this bill and encourage members to similarly support the wishes of land-holders in the Burnett region.

I commend the minister on this bill. He must leap out of bed to come to this place with legislation that he knows will be of benefit to the Burnett. I think of the joy he must receive from listening to 57 to 60 minutes of the member for Callide. He must be excited and filled with expectation that this bill contains 147 clauses to be considered later tonight. The contributions of the member for Callide have been described as a six-minute speech repeated 10 times or as an argument that should take one and a half minutes to set out elongated to 60 minutes to have a greater impact. I commend the minister on the bill.