



Speech by

Paul Hoolihan

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard Tuesday, 9 May 2006

WATER AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (7.40 pm): In rising to support the Water Amendment Bill, I suggest that the minister might like to spend some of his department's funding on a crystal ball and a magic wand because, according to the member for Caloundra, that is the only way that good government can occur. It is patently obvious that that is not correct.

I support the Water Amendment Bill and I congratulate the minister on the work of his department. In doing so, I would like to address the progress being made in central Queensland in relation to water supply matters.

Whilst most speakers will deal with aspects of the bill that relate to south-east Queensland, I turn to the Capricorn Coast, which has been on level 3 water restrictions for some 12 months. We take our water from two very small creeks north of Yeppoon and they are in a state of great distress. Therefore, I wish to broaden the geographic discussion on the new Water Commission to include how it might impact on and assist central Queensland.

The central Queensland regional water supply study was initiated by the state government in 2004. Through that study a draft water supply strategy was developed collaboratively with local government. The draft water supply strategy was made available for a three-month period for public comment and is expected to be finalised midyear. I am pleased to see that the Water Amendment Bill 2006 recognises the strategy development undertaken by the state and local governments, and provides arrangements for it to be transitioned as if the work were undertaken under the bill.

Contrary to the suggestion that some of this is knee-jerk government, the central Queensland draft water supply strategy was developed through a partnership process. Contributions have been made by local government, state government, water service providers, the Central Queensland Local Government Association, industry and Indigenous and community representatives. Therefore, it is essential that the good work achieved through this process be given recognition in the legislation.

Earlier today in the chamber I spoke of Beef Australia 2006. I point out that central Queensland is critical to Queensland's future development. In central Queensland mining expansion as well as the expansion of the industrial and agricultural sectors are expected to contribute substantially to Queensland's future prosperity. The Dawson-Mackenzie-Fitzroy watertable and rivers are the second largest watershed in Australia. Real consideration is being given to how the water that flows through those rivers can be used to support the expansion of industry.

A growing population demand for water by mining and industry, combined with a naturally variable climate, has seen water resources in central Queensland come under increasing pressure, as they have in other areas as indicated by the member for Barron River in her speech today. The current drought, which is exacerbated by climate change, has highlighted this for the rural, industrial and urban sectors. Any long-term effects of climate change could exacerbate water supply issues for all of Queensland, but certainly for central Queensland where conditions have become progressively drier over the past 100 years. Once the central Queensland water supply strategy is finalised, it will be a guide for the central Queensland

communities to maximise the effectiveness of existing supplies through water trading and improved water use efficiency and it is a path forward for future infrastructure development.

Two concerns repeatedly raised during consultations on the strategy were: how will it be delivered and how can we ensure the strategy does not just gather dust on a shelf and is never delivered on? Previously, there was no real means of delivering a strategy of this type, but the Water Amendment Bill 2006 provides that means. The bill provides the means for transitioned existing work undertaken for the Central Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy. That means that there is now a statutory process that can be used to ensure regional water security programs, such as the strategy being developed in central Queensland, can be delivered.

In concluding my remarks, I acknowledge the government's commitment to raising the Eden Bann Weir on the Fitzroy River and to building a new weir at Rookwood, also on the Fitzroy River. That is to be funded through the Queensland Future Growth Fund. As part of that contribution to water supply in central Queensland, I have spoken to the Premier, Deputy Premier and other ministers in relation to our water supply problems on the Capricorn Coast to seek the provision of a pipeline. Previously, it had been suggested that a pipeline be run from Rockhampton's allocation in its barrage. However, despite all of its water flow, the Fitzroy River is not inexhaustible. The two new weirs will certainly contribute to the provision of additional water and will allow further consideration of that pipeline.

Both of the projects were detailed in the Central Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy. The government's commitment to the projects is proof positive of the importance of the region-wide water supply strategy process.

During this debate, I listened with interest to the member for Maryborough, who mentioned that the dam was not going to be built in his electorate. Then he said that he is not a nimby—not in my backyard. It appears that he means that we can build a dam, but not anywhere he lives, although we have to make sure that there is enough water. Once again I say to the minister, perhaps a crystal ball and magic wand will assist in making all of those dreams come true, although certainly that is not the way of good government. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.