



Speech by

**Dr Bruce Flegg**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2007

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### **MOTION: WATER ASSETS**

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (5.55 pm): I have great pleasure in rising to second the amendment moved by the member for Maroochydore. What we are seeing here in the House today is an old and tired trick—a very tired trick—and that is to move a complex multipart motion full of motherhood statements and hope that we need to vote against one part of that motion so that the government can allege that we have voted against motherhood statements. It is very old and it is very tired.

Let us start with part one of the government's motion. I can see the anxiety on the faces of those opposite. I can assure them that we will accept their assertion that we need secure water. We will accept it. We agree with them. They have bipartisan support. We need secure water. But I am amazed that in the first part of its motion the government has the temerity to include that we recognise the need for the provision of new water infrastructure, because it has been a case of the road to Damascus—it has had 10 years—to realise that we need new water infrastructure and to date not one piece of it has been built. Not one drop of water! Here we are moving a motion to affirm the need for new water infrastructure. We agree, but we wish those opposite had done it 10 years ago when they knew that 1,500 people were moving to this state every week.

**Government members** interjected.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Dr FLEGG:** I take that interjection. We were telling those opposite that we needed new water infrastructure. I am glad they finally realised it and we will support them in that today.

The issue before us today about council water assets is again, as the member for Maroochydore said, the mother of diversions, because seizing these assets is not about delivering more water. What is about delivering more water is new sources for water, the infrastructure that those opposite completely ignored for a decade, a responsibility that was clearly this state government's and not that of local government.

We could put an end to the charade of this debate right now. Let us just get real about it. This is a debate about the appropriate funding of local authorities and their communities. That is all it is about. The rest of it is nonsense. The reality is if 13 per cent of the council rate base is stripped out something has to give—rates go up or services are cut. All the mickey mouse arguments about tax equivalents, valuation formulas et cetera are a nonsense. The income being sourced from water assets has been built up by investment over time and it must be replaced. Let us put down the feeble argument by the government that ratepayers and taxpayers are all one and the same and it is all one pot. For a start, there are many more taxpayers than there are ratepayers and council services are different from the type of services delivered by the state government.

We heard the Treasurer and his voodoo economics. It is scary to hear a Treasurer who does not know the difference between a ratepayer and a taxpayer. There is a substantial difference. We have a Treasurer who does not know that local government delivers a level of services and a type of services that are different. People in the Treasurer's electorate understand that, because one of the projects is the Northern Link, which members in his electorate are desperate for. It is a project that is dependent on

funding from the local government, the Brisbane City Council. Today the Brisbane City Council passed a motion. Time will defeat me in reading it into the record so I will table it.

*Tabled paper:* Document titled 'Proposed motion'.

The motion of the Brisbane City Council was passed unanimously and is substantially similar to the motion we are debating here today. This motion is a farce. The Liberal members and Labor members in City Hall were able to vote unanimously for the motion that I tabled. We should not be wasting our time here. Surely no more time should be wasted on this smoke and mirrors proposition. It is just about robbing local communities of the services that councils provide in order to prop up the failing budget position of the state government.