



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

Hansard Wednesday, 6 June 2007

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### WATER ASSETS

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.54 pm): If we are really to test just how genuine this government is swearing on its heart and telling us that it does not believe in flogging off state assets, we only have to look at recent history. It got \$1.2 billion when it sold Powerdirect to AGL. It sold off Sun Retail to Origin for \$1.2 billion. It sold off Sungas to AGL for \$75 million. It sold off Allgas Energy to Australian Pipeline Trust for \$535 million. Then there is the Golden Casket sale. When this Labor Treasurer stands up here and tells us to trust her, that the government is not going to flog off these new amalgamated water assets once it strips them away from councils without fully compensating them—just trust it—quite frankly we do not believe her.

The government's track record thus far has been abysmal. It is interesting to note that when one looks at the wording of the government's amendment to the motion it does not say that it will never privatise water assets; it says that it is not considering privatising the water assets in south-east Queensland that will be taken off councils. One could probably argue that prior to all of these other government owned assets being flogged off the government would have run a similar line. It would have said, 'We are not considering selling off these assets,' until of course it went out there, did its deals, took the money and ran. This state Labor government has flogged off a record number of state assets for a record amount of money, so we just do not trust it. With regard to what we have seen in recent times with councils and forced council amalgamations, this Treasurer and her colleagues assured councils that they were not going to act in the way they did. What happened? Those councils found that they were lied to.

More recently, when the minister for local government addressed the Property Council luncheon on the Sunshine Coast he was asked a very specific question about whether the government would indeed sell off water assets. He gave a very long answer, but he did not say, 'No, this government will not sell off these water assets.'

**Mr FRASER:** I rise to a point of order. That is not the case. The member is misrepresenting what I said to the Property Council luncheon that she was attending and I ask her to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Maroochydore.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Did the minister find it offensive, because it certainly was not untrue? The standing orders—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, would you like to clarify your point of order?

**Mr FRASER:** Yes. Whatever is untrue is by definition offensive and I do so take that offence.

**Miss SIMPSON:** I withdraw that statement and I will put it this way: all of the people I talked to who commented upon the minister's statement said, 'Gee, the minister didn't give us an assurance that this government will never sell off water assets.' The minister had the opportunity to give that clarification. Instead, he simply referred to the report and gave a very voluminous, verbose response but not that simple clear message. The people of Queensland do not trust this government after what we have seen occur in recent times. This Labor government is the reason there is a water crisis. It does not matter how we

reorganise on the books the assets of council; it does not in fact deliver one extra drop of water—not one extra drop of water. But what it does do is put into the hands of this Labor state government considerable assets which it has the ability to forcibly take away from ratepayers who have contributed to those assets and then in fact cost shift back to those ratepayers by the fact that they will not be fully compensated. The figures that we have heard to date of about \$2 billion that the state government will contribute back to councils if it takes those assets certainly has been met with a great deal of concern from local governments which have said that that will not be sufficient to address the loss of revenue from those local government areas.

This Labor government has failed to build timely bulk water supplies in Queensland. It is now building them in a panicked way, which will cost future generations up to three times more for their water, and even more. But in regard to the asset stream and the income from it, this Labor government cannot be trusted not to flog off the silver and not to flog off people's water assets.