



Speech by
Ian Rickuss

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2007

WATER AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL AND SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND WATER (RESTRUCTURING) BILL

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (3.22 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate to the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Bill 2007 and the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. Most of the things that can be said about these bills have been said. I am sure the ministers have heard enough from members on this side and on their own side about these bills. But I would just like to say a few things.

The Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill has some good points. It relates to monitoring household water use. It makes sense. Domestic bores have been left alone, although with some regulations. There is always going to be a point of contention with bore owners. Those people have developed bores on their own land. They have spent quite a bit of money on supplying their own land with an adequate water supply. It is a delicate situation when that water is then being used for a town's water supply. I know that, even though the Gatton and Laidley townships had been hooked up to the Wivenhoe Dam for years, they used bore water. Some of those bores now water the local parks and that sort of thing. It makes common sense to have those restrictions in the bill.

Some of the minister's emergency powers that are contained in this bill are already contained in the Water Act. I do not know whether the minister needs any more emergency powers. I have a bit of a worry about the delegations of those powers to the department. I think that, through the delegation of those powers to the department, the minister's interpretation of those powers gets a bit distorted. But I am sure we will discuss that more in the consideration in detail stage.

In relation to the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Bill, as the member for Nicklin has just said, the compensation that is involved with this bill is really about the councils getting enough money to help them through when they no longer get the money that they do now from water. The councils get a return from the water. That money might cross-subsidise other smaller council projects. That is why the council of mayors has come up with this \$6 billion figure. I think that, if the government is willing to get an independent examination carried out of that compensation so that the councils believe that they are getting a fair compensation for their water, they would be quite happy with that and I think the government would be quite happy with that. Really, that is the way to go.

It does not matter who charges for the water—whether it is the state government or the councils. If there is an extra charge for it, someone has to pay for it and it is going to be the taxpayers—it is going to be the constituents in our electorates. It is as simple as that. So really, whether it is a state government that puts on the charge or the councils that put on the charge, if there is going to be an extra charge I think the state government has to treat the councils fairly. That charge will be delivered either through the rates notices or through state taxes. That is the way it goes.

Really, the councils deserve to get fair compensation. I think an independent arbiter should be brought in so that fair compensation could be distributed to the councils. With those few words, I will support the bills.