



Speech by

**Peter Lawlor**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

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## **MOTION: LOCAL AUTHORITIES, WATER SUPPLY**

**Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (6.18 pm): I support the amended motion and I certainly agree with the sentiments expressed therein. When it comes to water there must be cooperation between all levels of government, particularly local and state.

The original motion seems to imply that at one time there was a great deal of cooperation between state governments and the local authorities. I served on the Gold Coast City Council from 1988 to 1994 and for those last three years I was the chairman of the planning committee. I was one of only three aldermen who opposed the amalgamation of the Gold Coast City Council and the Albert shire. The other aldermen were Lex Bell and Gary Baildon. I know that there are members on the other side of the debate who have also served in local government.

My point is that the level of cooperation with the state government was fairly mixed. At the time of the amalgamation I made an observation that at least it would lead to a united position and more cooperation with the state for the benefit of the region, particularly on issues such as water and development on the flood plain. There were occasions of cooperation such as with the construction of the rail line and other roads, including the M1.

However, the Gold Coast City Council and the Albert Shire Council would have regular joint meetings to discuss issues of concern to both councils—issues that required a joint approach to the state government. In those days dealing with the state government was very much an us-and-them situation, because I think they were fairly used to dealing with a conservative and certainly National Party-led government. It was a fairly mixed situation. There was no unanimous position on how to deal with the state government. With regard to water, the Gold Coast City Council owned the Hinze Dam freehold and sold water to the Albert Shire Council. Every year there would be an argument about what the Albert Shire Council had to pay for that water. Invariably, that would have to be resolved by a state government appointed arbitrator.

The Albert Shire Council did no planning for growth, particularly when it came to water consumption. Issues of water were raised in many meetings with the Albert Shire Council. The Gold Coast representatives would point out that one cannot keep subdividing cow paddocks to accommodate 2,000 or 3,000 people where previously six people and 200 or 300 cows had lived. Its response would be, 'Well, we'll just buy more water from you.' We would then say, 'Well, there might come a time'—remember, this was about 1990—'when the Gold Coast can't sell you anymore water.' In those days that was greeted with much merriment. Look where we are today!

With regard to planning for dams, the Nationals often raised the issue of the scrapping of the planned Wolffdene Dam. Of course they neglect to mention that this was a platform of the Goss Labor government in 1989 and the position was supported by the Liberals. So even if the coalition had retained government the dam still would not have been built. The Wivenhoe Dam was constructed with the cooperation of the local authority, the Brisbane City Council, and the state government. It was built in the 1970s. In those days there were just as many protesters around about the building of Wivenhoe Dam as there are now about the Traveston Dam. If the Bjelke-Petersen government in those days had taken notice

of the protesters, where would we be? We would not have the Wivenhoe Dam to deal with the present situation.

**Mrs Pratt** interjected.

**Mr LAWLOR:** It was also for storage. Whatever the original purpose was, it is now serving the purpose of storage of drinking water.

Several years ago when the Hinze Dam was at 25 per cent and the Wivenhoe was at 90 per cent, I was told by engineers that a pipeline system was needed that connected the dams because at that time—over five years ago—there was enough water in the Wivenhoe to supply the whole of south-east Queensland for four years without one more drop of rain falling. Now we are building that water grid to connect the various dams to spread the available water, say from Hinze to Wivenhoe and so on.

When we talk about cooperation, the Gold Coast gets water from the Wivenhoe Dam, to the north of the Gold Coast around Beenleigh, yet councillors down there were saying—and we are talking about cooperation—that they were not going to give any of their water to Brisbane, notwithstanding the fact that the Gold Coast is getting water from Brisbane right now. The idea that there has been cooperation in the past is a bit of a myth.

This government is quite prepared to cooperate with all local authorities. On Monday eight backbenchers met with the Local Government Association, including Paul Bell, Greg Hallam and several other officers. It was a good meeting—a cooperative meeting. This government is quite prepared to cooperate with the local authorities.