



Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

MOTION: LOCAL AUTHORITIES, WATER SUPPLY

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (6.01 pm): I rise to participate in the debate and speak in support of the motion moved by my parliamentary colleague the member for Gladstone. I know that the member for Gladstone went to a great deal of effort to try to ensure that her motion was moderate and not over the top. After listening to the Deputy Premier's amendment, I also can see that the Deputy Premier has tried to ensure that her amendment was likewise moderate and not over the top.

Before I progress directly to the substance of the motion, I wish to take members to section 30 of the Local Government Act, which sets out that the local authority shall have and possess and may exercise and perform express powers and authorities including the power to make by-laws in relation to the following matters—and there are a lot of matters listed and included in those matters is the power to supply water.

The motion the member for Gladstone has moved is in two parts. It talks about a partnership. The first part is an acknowledgement of the work undertaken by local councils in providing the very important water service to their constituents. The second part calls on the Premier to work in cooperation with councils. In speaking to this motion, I share with members what I understand has been happening on the Sunshine Coast and, in particular, in the Caloundra and Maroochy areas.

The Deputy Premier spoke about the need for a regional approach. In 1946—yes, almost 60 years ago—the Landsborough and Maroochy shire councils proposed the construction of a dam to provide water to both shires. They proposed this in partnership. In 1982, 25 years ago, Jack Beausang of the Landsborough council, now the Caloundra council, and Fred Murray of the Maroochy Shire Council teamed together in partnership and started the project at a site now known as Baroon Pocket Dam. In 1984 the Landsborough-Maroochy Water Supply Board, now known as AquaGen, was formed. A dam, tunnel and water treatment plant was built on the site and completed in 1989 at a cost of approximately \$40 million. This dam is still operating today and is the primary source of all the treated water for the Caloundra City Council—with the exception of Maleny, which has its own treatment plant—and I understand supplies 65 per cent of the requirements of the Maroochy shire population.

In 1989 a hydro-electric power plant was established and built at the water treatment plant in partnership by those two councils. I understand that this hydro-electric power plant provides an electricity savings each year to the value of \$150,000 and also enables the plant to receive each year \$50,000 of renewable energy certificates. AquaGen is a real life example of how for over 60 years the Caloundra and Maroochy councils have been able to work together in a genuine partnership to ensure the provision of good reliable drinking water to residents and visitors to the region. I table a copy of AquaGen's annual report for the year 2004-05 and, in particular, draw the attention of members to pages 14 to 16 under the heading of 'Planning for the Future'.

Tabled paper: Copy of the Aquagen Annual report 04/05.

Tabled paper: Copy of the Aquagen Water & Renewable Energy Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2005.

Tabled paper: Copy of documents downloaded on 14 March 2007 concerning the Caloundra-Maroochy water supply.

Today we on the Sunshine Coast have safe, reliable, treated drinking water. I believe our local councils—Noosa, Maroochy and Caloundra—are all doing a very good job in not just providing treated water for today but also planning for the region's water needs for the future, a regional approach. I quote from Noosa Mayor Bob Abbot's response to the motion. He said—

Let's get back to the position that allows each level of government to get on with the things we are good at and work together to provide a better water service to south-east Queensland.

I table his written response.

Tabled paper: Correspondence, dated 14 March 2007, from Mr Bob Abbot, Mayor, Noosa Council.

I also note that these comments are consistent with the survey of south-east Queensland residents commissioned by the Local Government Association of Queensland. I table that article for the benefit of all members.

Tabled paper: Copy of Local Government news release, dated 14 March 2007, titled 'Survey supports Councils' maintaining Control of Water'.

A further article I wish to table is a press release I have received this evening from the Maroochy Shire Council in response to this motion and in response to the Deputy Premier's press release dated 9 March 2007. I quote in part from that press release—

The facts are that Maroochy Shire Council made the following investments directly in Maroochy Water Services assets over the three years identified on the attached table. Capital expenditure on water and sewerage assets, \$76.3 million; reduction on water and sewerage debt, \$16.2 million; transfers of water and sewerage reserves, \$16.9 million—a total of \$109.4 million.

Tabled paper: Details of investments by the Maroochy Shire Council in water services.

I ask all members before voting on this motion to reflect on comments that were made in this chamber and in federal parliament and in the media just over a fortnight ago when we saw the similar argy-bargy between the federal government and state premiers around Australia in relation to the water flow in the Murray-Darling Basin. We all have a role to play in working in partnership.

Time expired.