



Speech by

Phil Weightman

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (12.41 pm): I rise to speak to the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Bill 2007. The purpose of this bill is to give effect to stage 1 of the proposed south-east Queensland urban water supply reforms. The main objectives of this bill are to establish the four new statutory bodies to be controlled by the state and to provide a process for the transfer of the bulk water businesses to the new water entities. This bill is essential to establish the new water entities and to facilitate a structured and responsible vesting of the bulk water businesses from local governments to the new water entities.

In my area in the Redlands, the council has advised Treasury that it has spent a lot of money over the years attempting to drought-proof the community. As a result, Redlands has its own water sources and water treatment plants and is currently not affected by the drought to the extent experienced by other councils in south-east Queensland. However, like all the other councils, the Redlands council will be fairly and equitably compensated for its assets. This has been reiterated by the Premier and the Treasurer on many occasions.

The state is taking dams, major transport infrastructure and water treatment plants from this council. The mayor of Redlands has told the people of the Redlands that the value of their assets being acquired by the state is \$350 million and that the state is proposing to pay only \$50 million for them. That is quite simply not true. The state has not provided any figures whatsoever to the Redlands council. This is nothing more than a disingenuous political stunt and a misleading statement at the very least. I had sincerely hoped that the Redlands mayor would not feel a need to indulge in any pre-emptive tactics.

On a more positive note, I am glad to hear that the mayor of Redlands has taken up the Premier's offer to meet with Treasury officials to discuss this issue. I commend this as it is a clear indication to the people of the Redlands that the mayor is willing to work with the state government to obtain the best possible understanding of the situation in order to achieve fair and equitable compensation for all the assets that are going to be taken. In that regard I look forward to a positive outcome.

What is disappointing about this debate is what the Lord Mayor of Brisbane has been saying publicly. Clearly, for him this is nothing more than the start of his election campaign of scaring residents about rate increases. I hope that the other mayors in south-east Queensland see through his political stunt. It is important that the councils work with the government. On many occasions I have said that the issue of water security is far too important to play politics with.

A committee with government and council representatives has been meeting each week to determine the exact value of the water assets being taken over by the government. That is the proper place in which to determine the value of the assets, not through the media. As I have said, this committee meets every week and councils should keep working through that process rather than grandstand in the media.

This bill is about supporting water reforms in Queensland. Chapter 2, part 1 of the bill establishes the Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority, the Queensland Bulk Water Transport Authority, the

Queensland Manufactured Water Authority, and the SEQ Water Grid Manager. The new water entities are non-corporate statutory bodies and their governance framework is similar to that of GOCs. The new water entities will not be subject to the Commonwealth's Workplace Relations Act 1996.

This bill facilitates the transfer of the bulk water businesses from the existing water entities to the new water entities, including by the issue of transfer notices and project directions. The transfer notices, which will be gazetted, will transfer the bulk water infrastructure from the existing businesses to the new water entities.

The Queensland government has made the commitment that there will be no forced redundancies and that transferred employees will not be disadvantaged as a result of the water reforms. These commitments are reinforced in this bill. The bill provides that a transfer notice may make provision about employees and their rights and that transferred employees will be employed on the same terms and conditions with the new water entity. The Treasurer may also approve a staff support framework dealing with the transition of affected employees as a result of the urban water supply reforms in south-east Queensland. The existing and new water entities must act in conformity with the framework. This approach is identical to that taken in relation to the local government amalgamations. It is proposed that the transfer of the bulk water businesses, including staff, will occur progressively between 1 January and 1 July 2008.

I support this bill, because it enables security of water for south-east Queensland well into the future. We have an obligation to do this and this bill will support that obligation. I commend the bill to the House.