



Speech by

**Rachel Nolan**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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## **WATER ASSETS**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (6.19 pm): I love the debate on the 5.30 motion. I think it is one of the most interesting debates of the week. I think it is when there is really something to say on matters of policy and principle. Tonight though I have to say that I have struggled to understand what the opposition is actually saying let alone to get excited about it. So I will see, from what I can glean particularly from the member for Moggill's contribution, if it is possible to understand it sufficiently to give a genuine response.

Something I did pick up in this debate this evening was a few words from the member for Warrego. I think we should all—particularly those members who did not hear it the first time—have the opportunity to hear what the member for Warrego had to say. The minister for local government was on his feet, as we all heard a minute ago, talking about just how much money the state government has given to councils in recent years for their own water assets. He was talking about the Lenthalls Dam in Hervey Bay. He was talking about things like the \$6 million that has gone to the Ipswich City Council in recent years for sewerage upgrades. Do members know what the member for Warrego said? He said, 'Yeah, everyone has now got a new Toyota.' That is what he thinks of local government really.

What the member for Warrego thinks of local government really is that local governments have rorted the water money, that every councillor has now got a new Toyota. He comes in here every day of the week, hand on heart as the great defender of inefficient, tiny rural local governments. What does he really think of them? He really thinks that they take the water money, put it in their back pockets and drive around in new Toyotas. I think the local governments that he claims to defend would be fascinated to know, when he comes in here and they are not around, just what it is that he really thinks.

So what is it that the member for Moggill really thinks? I struggled but this is what I have. Three weeks ago in Australian politics we heard Peter Costello—another bloke with the words 'Liberal' and 'Treasurer' in his title—in an attack on Kevin Rudd which the *Australian* described as so biting as to be a massive attack on Kevin Rudd's credibility, call Kevin Rudd an 'old-fashioned socialist'. Good grief, if Kevin Rudd is a socialist, imagine what Peter Costello would say about Bruce Flegg! Because tonight Dr Flegg, the shadow Treasurer and the Leader of the Liberal Party, has come in here and raged against privatisation. He has raged against the private sector. He has suggested that it is outrageous for the state government to actively manage its asset base by selling off some assets so that we can buy some new ones from time to time. He put his fist on the table and said, 'It is outrageous to suggest that the private sector should get their hands anywhere near water.' In doing so, he has been pretty consistent with coalition policy in recent years.

I remember the Borbidge government, sadly—I wish I did not, but I do. One of the things that I remember very well about the Borbidge government was its break-up of electricity assets. It split up the electricity industry, ready to put it up for sale to the private sector and flog it off. The only thing that saved it—the only thing that kept the generators in Queensland in public hands—was the election of the Beattie government in 1998, because at that time we had a Liberal Treasurer who was committed to privatisation. That is not the case now—now the Liberals want to rebureaucratise everything and they do not want the private sector anywhere near water.

I thought: what is this about? Has the Liberal Party changed its spots? Does it believe in something else now? So I looked on the web. The web tells me under the Liberal Party beliefs—

We believe that, wherever possible, government should not compete with an efficient private sector; and that businesses and individuals—not government—are the true creators of wealth and employment.

So I just wonder how this goes. There is no doubt that in Queensland this government has been very clear that there is no plan, secret or otherwise—there is no intention—to privatise the water assets. There is no intention to go down that path. We have been very clear from start to finish about water. What I cannot understand is what on earth is with the Liberal Party?