



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Thursday, 29 October 2009

SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND (DISTRIBUTION AND RETAIL RESTRUCTURING) AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROVISIONS BILL

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—LNP) (10.55 pm): In Queensland we have gone from having the cheapest fuel in Australia to the dearest. Even though this bill has some good aspects, it will mean that we will see the same with water. This bill is before the House because of Labor inaction. The bill is before the House because Labor has failed to plan for population growth. This bill is before the House because it became politically sexy in the 1980s not to build dams—not even in the right location. We should have built the Wolffdene Dam, as many speakers have said before.

This bill is before the House because people forgot that if they want to drink water then they need to build dams in the right places. As I have mentioned in this place a number of times, the proof that this Labor government failed to plan or at least lacked the political courage to do the right thing is that in the 19 years from 1989 this Labor government built only one major piece of water infrastructure: Paradise Dam. Between 1955 and 1974, during the time when Fred Haigh was the water commissioner, 12 major pieces of water infrastructure were built.

We had politicians in power who knew what planning for growth really meant and took it seriously. How do I know this? Because it said so on the plaque in a picnic area overlooking Lake Monduran—

Mr ROBERTSON: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is repetition of a speech the honourable member made during the previous debate. There has been a understanding that members do not engage in tedious repetition by providing the same speech, albeit for two different bills.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Which bill are you referring to, Minister?

Mr ROBERTSON: The last bill we debated with respect to water was within the last two months. The *Hansard* record will show word for word his recollection of Fred Haigh, the plaque and the number of pieces of infrastructure. It is word for word.

Mr MESSENGER: They don't like to hear the truth, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Will the member be seated. Will the member ensure that he does not repeat speeches.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you for your direction, Madam Deputy Speaker. I note that the minister does not really like to hear the truth. He has an aversion to the truth.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his speech.

Mr MESSENGER: I would love to resume my speech. The minister seems frightened of what I am about to say. The \$2.5 billion spent on the waste water plant that is producing nothing indicates that this government was prepared to use the people of the south-east corner as lab rats for a grand social experiment whereby families would have been forced to drink recycled toilet water. There is no word of

endocrinal disruptors or the cancers they cause or the problems associated with drinking recycled toilet water.

There is a whole debate on climate change associated with water in a general sense. Labor does not understand the facts of climate change and the effect it has on water. Those opposite do not understand the facts. Every time Labor politicians open their mouths about climate change and the facts on water they prove how ignorant they are and how they have not looked into the science of climate change. Labor politician after Labor politician has jumped up and said that this world is getting hotter and drier.

Mrs Miller: It is.

Mr MESSENGER: We have had a bite here. It is. We had the Premier—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Will the member address his comments through the chair.

Mr MESSENGER: We had the former Premier Beattie jump to his feet and say ‘Oh, it’s getting hotter and drier.’ There are just two problems with that statement. One is that for the past nine years the average world temperature has decreased. But let us forget that. No, no, we will not talk about accurate science. Forget NASA. The other problem with that little fact is that it is a problem of physics. For every degree increase in average world temperature, guess what? It actually gets wetter on a worldwide scale, because there is an increase in the hydrological cycle because of the increase in heat and—

A government member: This is kooky.

Mr MESSENGER: I will take that interjection. It is kooky? That just shows the ignorance and the lack of reading and the lack of experience of those opposite. I ask the member opposite to check out Tim Flannery’s book and read what Tim Flannery has to say about the physics of climate change. The minister in his second reading speech stated—

... the Water Supply Act regulates drinking water service providers and recycled water entities primarily to protect public health.

...

These amendments will also enhance the ability of the regulator to respond to drinking or recycled water quality issues.

These amendments will affect not only those residents of the south-east corner but also ratepayers and residents throughout Queensland. It is to that aspect of the legislation that I would like to direct my comments, particularly part 8, titled Amendment of Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act, which is on page 78. Within this bill every amendment except one shows where the government’s twisted priorities lie. If we go on from page 78 in the bill we see the amendment of section 13 of the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act, which is the requirement for a service provider to give information. Give it a tick. Yes, that looks good. That amendment inserts the term ‘responsible entity’. Clause 134 replaces annual reports with reports and other publications by the regulator. Yes, give that a tick. Quite good. Clause 135 amends section 20, which is titled ‘Who must apply for registration as a service provider’. Yes, give that a tick.

There are ticks all the way through to clauses 136 and 137. Clause 138 relates to requests about information on a recycled water scheme. That is also good. It is protecting public health. Then further in clause 138 it states—

A responsible entity must comply with the requirement unless the responsible entity has a reasonable excuse.

The clause states further—

Maximum penalty—200 penalty units.

If you work that out at \$100 per penalty unit, that is a \$20,000 fine. That is a \$20,000 fine in a piece of legislation that deals with the protection of humans—of children, of families—in terms of public health. That financial penalty, which is supposed to be a deterrent and protect the public health of families—of children—is a quarter of the penalty that protects flying foxes from being harassed. Unlike the flying fox penalty, which stipulates the possibility of a jail sentence, in this legislation there is no jail sentence imposed and this legislation relates to the protection of public health. Once again, I finally make the point that this is legislation that relates to public health and not to the health of flying foxes or, indeed, where they sleep.

I have referred local government officials and elected representatives to the Queensland Ombudsman—and I am speaking in relation to the water supply at Bororan, which is covered by this legislation—and also to the Crime and Misconduct Commission to investigate their role in the Bororan water crisis. I have already told members about this matter after it was revealed that residents had been unknowingly drinking council supplied water that was not fit for human consumption for at least 18 months. In my opinion, after carefully assessing the facts and the documents presented to me by my constituents, who are a water engineer, a former council employee and a water officer, I believe that there is a high likelihood that the actions of local government officials, elected representatives and possibly state officials may have been illegal, unreasonable, unjust and based on a mistake of law or fact, or wrong.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Burnett, could you please indicate where Bororan is? I do not believe that it is in South-East Queensland, which is what we are dealing with. Would you come back to the bill, please?

Mr MESSENGER: Mr Deputy Speaker, for clarification, Bororan is just south of Gladstone and it is in the electorate of Burnett. Once again, I would remind—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you please come back to the bill, which is dealing with the restructuring of water in South-East Queensland.

Mr MESSENGER: Can I clarify for—

Mr Robertson: Bororan is not in South-East Queensland. What more clarification do you need?

Mr MESSENGER: The last time I looked, Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill is not just—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a form to be followed under standing orders. If you want to disagree with my ruling, I invite you to do so. Come back to the bill, which is dealing with South-East Queensland water. If you do not, I will sit you down. Thank you.

Mr MESSENGER: I refer to part 8, page 78 of this bill, the South-East Queensland (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Natural Resources Provisions Bill, which amends a number of acts. Part of the bill that is before the House is amending the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008. I am specifically speaking to that particular part of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: At the moment, you are speaking in direct contravention of my direction and I take that as a reflection on the chair. Please come back to the South-East Queensland (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Natural Resources Provisions Bill.

Mr MESSENGER: And I follow your direction and I am speaking to—

Mr SPEAKER: Then follow it, thank you.

Mr MESSENGER: And I appreciate the direction that you are giving me, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am speaking to page 78. Can I direct you to the amendment to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act, which I believe has direct relevance to the issue that I wish to discuss in the parliament tonight on behalf of my constituents from Burnett and specifically in Bororan, who have been drinking unpotable water for 18 months, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burnett—

Mr MESSENGER: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Take your seat. Thank you. I do not wish to hear from you anymore. You are not staying on the bill and you have breached standing orders. I call the member for Bundamba.

Mr MESSENGER: I rise to a point of order. I move—

That the member be no longer be heard.