



Speech by

Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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WATER CHARGES

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (10.10 pm): I have received numerous complaints from constituents in my electorate relating to an increase in water charges imposed on them as a result of actions undertaken by the Bligh Labor government. The outrageous charges have added even further pressure and burden on many household budgets because this Labor government is a crisis driven government that is always on the back foot. The wasteful spending on the \$7 billion South-East Queensland water grid, including the hundreds of millions of dollars wasted on the scrapped Traveston Dam project, has ensured that Queenslanders are paying more—a lot more—for their water.

Individual councils were initially responsible for local water infrastructure and distribution until the state government requisitioned them in what some described as 'the great water swindle'. In legislation that was passed earlier this year, three new bodies were created for water distribution in South-East Queensland. Unitywater was established as the water distribution authority for the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay Regional Council areas. I have written to the CEO of Unitywater, Mr Jon Black, to ascertain a breakdown of the associated set-up costs and how these have impacted on consumers.

The Bligh Labor government has positioned itself to escape the blame for the higher water charges and continues to play the buck-passing game rather than own up to Queenslanders. While Unitywater staff and management cop the abuse from a hostile public, the state has washed its hands of the mess it created. The accounts that have been distributed contain a charge for bulk water, a state government charge to recoup some of the costs involved in wasteful spending initiatives. People are certainly going to have to be far more frugal than they once were and make use of water-saving initiatives such as water tanks, greywater and other water-saving mechanisms. I would also encourage people to keep an eye on any suspected water leaks because any misused water will be felt very hard in the hip pocket.

Community groups and organisations have received massive hikes in their water costs and for some it will simply mean the end of operation. Businesses, and in particular small businesses, have also been slugged with increased charges. While some may not be able to absorb them, the costs will end up being passed on to consumers, meaning it is a double-dip charge. All of this indicates that this increase in charges can be best described as a great big new tax on everything. My concern is how this will impact on the cost of living expenses for my constituents. Many people are under pressure already and those on fixed incomes such as pensioners will be the hardest hit, which is often the case with Labor governments.

The system was fine until the Beattie and Bligh Labor governments got their grubby hands on the water. I call on the Bligh government to end the wasteful spending and look at any measures it can implement to encourage residents to purchase water tanks and other water-saving mechanisms. The federal Labor government has been just as bad as our state Labor government since it took office in 2007. Between the December quarter 2007 and the June quarter 2010, the cost of living has continually risen under federal Labor. One thing Queenslanders can do to stamp their disapproval at these cost of living increases is to vote for Tony Abbott and the coalition on Saturday. Is it any wonder a gentleman at the people's forum tonight asked a question along these lines: 'Prime Minister, how can we trust federal Labor when we have been so let down by state Labor?'

(Time expired)