



Speech by

**Jarrold Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

Hansard Wednesday, 6 October 2010

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## **SUNSHINE COAST, COST OF LIVING**

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (9.30 pm): I rise this evening in relation to a vitally important issue on the Sunshine Coast—that is, the cost of living. Residents of the Sunshine Coast are certainly suffering higher costs of living in terms of their fuel subsidy being deleted by the government and their rising electricity bills. We all remember the comments from the Premier and the Deputy Premier at the time that the privatisation of the electricity retail industry would drive down costs. It has not. An important issue on the Sunshine Coast at the moment is water. A few weeks ago I attended a water forum that I organised. I thank Jon Black, the CEO of Unitywater, for showing up. Some startling facts were revealed at that water forum and I would like to point out some of those to the House and the reality of the ever-increasing costs Sunshine Coast residents are facing.

I wrote to Unitywater and asked several questions. One of the questions I was asking, that was also raised at the community forum, was: what were the establishment costs for Unitywater? In 2007 the government took all the water assets from council. At the time Mayor Don Aldous said that it was the great water swindle. We asked what were the establishment costs in relation to this great water grid, the great Traveston Dam that was meant to be constructed and the great Tugun desalination plant that has just been handed over. Unitywater got back to me. It has done an audit account. It has spent \$7.28 million in establishment costs and says that will be passed on to consumers because the government has checked the audited books. I asked how much it has spent in marketing. It answered that billboard advertising cost \$177,000; office equipment cost \$206,000; marketing initiatives cost \$716,000; and T-shirts for new staff cost \$160,000. Then it gets better. It states—

Please recognise that these are not all the necessary establishment fees so far.

I will table a copy of the letter in which he goes on to talk about the wholesale grid price increase and the fact that Unitywater will be up for enormous capital expenditure in the future and also noting in terms of sewage treatment and environmental compliance that the state government has removed the 40 per cent subsidy for these works. It is a shameful minister that stands in this place and says that he has nothing to do with the increase in water prices on the Sunshine Coast because it is as a direct result of this government that it exists today.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 17 September 2010, from Jon Black, chief executive officer of Unitywater, to Jarrod Bleijie MP in relation to set-up costs for Unitywater [\[3314\]](#).