



Speech by

**Mark Ryan**

**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

Hansard Wednesday, 19 May 2010

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## **SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND WATER (DISTRIBUTION AND RETAIL RESTRUCTURING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (8.00 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As the minister said in his second reading speech, this bill is the latest step in the Bligh government's delivery of better water services in South-East Queensland.

In the Morayfield-Caboolture region there has been some major change to the structure of the local water businesses over the last few years. The Caboolture water business or CabWater, as it was more endearingly known, was merged into a new water business called Moreton Bay Water in March 2008. Now a new water business called Unitywater will service water users in the Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast regional council areas and will be jointly owned by the Moreton Bay Regional Council and the Sunshine Coast Regional Council.

I acknowledge that this has been a somewhat disruptive time for employees of the respective water businesses. I would like to put on record my appreciation of their understanding, patience and hard work in relation to these restructuring strategies. Also I would like to convey to Mr John Black, the new chief executive officer of Unitywater, and all employees of Unitywater my best wishes for what promises to be an exciting and dynamic time for water services in our local area.

Importantly, this latest reform delivers what all Queenslanders want from their water suppliers. Queenslanders want security of supply. Queenslanders want infrastructure and supply founded in long-term future demand planning. Queenslanders want a water supply network which anticipates population growth rather than one that follows that growth. Queenslanders want certainty of pricing. Queenslanders want and expect high standards of customer service delivery in respect of water supply providers.

I would like to spend a few moments discussing this bill's strong focus on high-quality customer service delivery and the inclusion of key customer protection provisions. As we have heard during this debate, a key feature of the South-East Queensland water reform program was the creation of three separate distributor-retailer businesses for South-East Queensland. These businesses would be responsible for improving the coordination and management of the water supply, delivering improved and more efficient water and wastewater services to customers and improving the management of water and wastewater infrastructure. Already the state owned water grid is delivering bulk water supply security for the Queensland of today and the Queensland of tomorrow.

The further reforms ultimately mean that customers will enjoy a better and more reliable water supply now and into the future. Specifically, this bill requires each distributor-retailer to develop a customer service charter which clearly defines a water customer's rights and obligations. This is a critically important matter because distributor-retailers will now be the main interface point with customers through the issuance of wastewater and water bills and the delivery of water services.

Importantly, an independent dispute resolution service and guaranteed service level standards will be established and will ensure customers are provided with the assurances they need in respect of water

supply. These amendments deliver improved access to information for customers and provide critical tools for the assessment and review of the distributor-retailer performance.

This bill also establishes an important hardship policy to assist those customers who may be experiencing circumstances which make it difficult for them to pay their water and wastewater bills. Provisions in this bill relating to the minimum supply of water for health and sanitation purposes, instalment payments and adequate notice requirements mean that those customers are supported in such circumstances.

The amendments in this bill are good amendments which continue the good work of this government in providing water supply for Queenslanders both now and into the future. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the minister, his staff, the departmental staff and the Parliamentary Counsel for their hard work in respect of this bill. I commend the bill to the House.