



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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WATER AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (4.25 pm): The Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill makes a multitude of amendments which I want to speak to, in particular amendments to the Queensland Competition Authority Act which are designed to update and enhance the existing process for the making of price determinations that will require the authority to consider implementing price paths in order to moderate the impact on consumers of the increase in price over time. The bill states for the first time that under the Queensland Competition Authority Act the authority will be required to explicitly consider the implementation of a price path when making a water pricing determination to moderate the impact of price increases on customers.

When this government first introduced full retail competition in Queensland for the electricity and gas retail markets, we were told that this would bring about competition and the Queensland Competition Authority would set the price determination. As members would be aware, electricity prices have increased by 40 per cent. But at the time the government was smart enough to pass the buck to the Queensland Competition Authority to set price regulations. Many people come to my office who are very disappointed and angry about the fact that their electricity bills have increased by up to 40 per cent over the last three or four years, and this will be exactly the same in that the government will pass the buck to the Queensland Competition Authority for water pricing.

This water price increase, like the electricity price increase, is all about this state government's mismanagement of water in Queensland. As members are aware, it did not prepare or plan for water infrastructure so instead we got the \$9 billion water grid that has not contributed one drop of water. Peter Beattie flew over the Traveston Crossing and then with hand on heart said, 'I will build my dam there,' and all of a sudden we have seen \$600 million of waste. That was all about giving the perception that the government was doing something about water to South-East Queensland voters to save its political hide. What do we have as a result? We have a \$9 billion deficit and now the Queensland Competition Authority will be setting water prices. Mark my words: water prices will skyrocket. They will skyrocket like electricity prices have skyrocketed up to 40 per cent in the last three years, and this is about passing the buck. But the people of Queensland know that this is the state government and when the next election comes they will know that this is an increase by the state government.

This bill also amends the Wild Rivers Act 2005 and related legislation primarily for the purpose of extending the wild rivers protection to the Lake Eyre Basin rivers, and it also makes a number of operational amendments. When the first wild rivers legislation was introduced on 28 September 2005, that legislation was pushed through parliament under the pretence of protecting rivers. However, it has nothing to do with protecting rivers but is designed to end sustainable economic and social development in the affected areas. This wild rivers legislation has nothing to do with protecting rivers at all. We know that, those opposite know that and the people of Queensland know that. This is about what the Wilderness Society and what the conservation movement want. They write the policies. The conservation movement writes the policies for the Labor Party and it stamps the policies. This is where you are at at present, because you have backed the conservation movement. You have kicked the workers in the guts. You are no longer a party for the workers.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kilburn): Order! Member for Dalrymple, direct your comments through the chair.

Mr KNUTH: They are no longer a party for the workers; they are a party that has been rubber-stamped by the conservation movement. There is a perception of wild rivers, because 95 per cent of those opposite me would not have seen—

Mr Wallace interjected.

Mr KNUTH: He would turn in his grave because of what Labor has done to the workers in Queensland. That is why the unions are out there protesting. That is why Queensland Rail unions are out there protesting. That is why the ETU is out there protesting. They will keep that momentum up right to the end—

Mr Wallace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Direct your comments through the chair and can we limit the shouting across the chamber.

Mr KNUTH: Wild rivers. What a great name! There is a perception of wild rivers. Ninety-five per cent of the members opposite me would never have seen a wild river and they do not understand. There is a perception of salmon swimming up the river, there are waterfalls, there are bears and there is this lovely scenery that we desperately need to protect. But if you see these wild rivers, you would see that they are infested with lantana, rubber vine, nagura burr, feral pigs that dig up and spread weeds right through these wild rivers from one end to the other, feral cats that are killing our native wildlife and wild dogs. However, we have a saviour and—

A government member: Bats?

Mr KNUTH: That is right. That is why they do not have the intestinal fortitude to allow us to move the bats by helicopter out of town, because the conservation movement is telling the Labor Party to not do it and to let us suffer with their filth.

We have these wild rivers that are full of feral cats, feral pigs, noxious weeds, rubber vine and nagura burr. But there is a perception that a wild river is a lovely place where people paddle their canoes. That is not the case. But we have a saviour for these infestations in these rivers and that is the landowner. Landowners protect and care for these rivers. For generations they have kept these rivers clean and tidy. But the very people who look after the rivers are the very people the government is going to kick out. Where does this logic come from?

I fully support Tony Abbott introducing a private member's bill to overturn the Queensland wild rivers legislation. He recognises that the wild rivers legislation goes too far and limits Indigenous people's economic opportunities. The LNP's economic focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people is much more than creating 35 wild river ranger positions before the end of the year, which was promised by Anna Bligh, to the detriment of the hundreds of planned Indigenous jobs that will now be lost as a direct result of Labor's wild rivers laws that have forced the abandonment of the cape aluminium project. The LNP believes in opportunity for sustainable, economic and social development in Indigenous communities, not little pretence sweeteners that do nothing for nothing. We are about job creation, not spin. That is why we oppose this bill.