



Speech by


**Michael Crandon**

**MEMBER FOR COOMERA**

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## **FAIRER WATER PRICES FOR SEQ AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (5.08 pm): I rise to add to the debate on the Fairer Water Prices for SEQ Amendment Bill 2011. Clause 7(2) (b), under the definition of 'water supplier' on page 8, specifically excludes all bulk water supply entities owned by the state. I am sponsoring an e-petition on the website calling on the government to freeze bulk water prices. I would ask all members from both sides of the House to go on to the website and support that petition.

These government members ignored water supply in the south-east corner for too long. In a nutshell, they panicked. After ignoring water supply issues for far too long, they panicked. They hit the panic button and they had to build a grid at all costs. They overspent and, boy, did they overspend; they overspent by a couple of billion dollars. They found themselves landing helicopters up around Traveston Dam and making big, broad statements, waving their arms and saying, 'We're going to build a dam here and this will solve all the problems of South-East Queensland.'

They invited contractors to come in and build a grid—and what a way to build the grid! They said, 'Don't worry about giving us any indication about what it might cost to build the grid. Why don't you just send us the invoice after you've knocked it together? Add a little bit of profit for yourself and we'll just pay it. You just keep on doing that. Keep giving us those invoices and adding your profit on top of it. Don't worry about what it will cost because we've got deep pockets. We'll be able to give you whatever it takes to build this grid because we're in panic mode as a government. We have this situation that we've ignored for 20 years and we are panicking. For goodness sake, just get out there and do it, boys.' There were billions of dollars in overspending, and now the people of my electorate are paying through the nose for this government's incompetence.

This morning the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities talked about solar power. There are flaws in the legislation around entitlements to solar power rebates. People in manufactured home parks miss out on ongoing rebates for installing solar panels. An individual living in a house next door to a manufactured home park could get the rebate, but if they decided to sell their house and move into the park they would suddenly miss out on the rebate on an ongoing basis. There is a flaw in the legislation.

The owners of manufactured home parks are also let down by the legislation. There is a difference between an electricity retailer who can charge a fee for reading meters and those who own a manufactured home park and who are not allowed to charge that fee. This is clearly an error in the drafting of the legislation that is putting pressure on and causing angst between manufactured home park owners and those people living in manufactured home parks.

**Ms CROFT:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I raise the question of relevance in relation to what the member is talking about. I would like to ask what relevance this has to the bill we are debating here today.

**Mr CRANDON:** A lovely segue into exactly what I was going to say.

**Mr Ryan:** Hang on, there is a point of order.

**Mr CRANDON:** Well, hop up and make your point of order if you want to make one.

**Ms CROFT:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask for your ruling on my point of order.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms O'Neill): I would ask the member please to return to the bill.

**Mr CRANDON:** Yes, certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you for your guidance in that respect. The relevance of what I was just talking about is that there are faults in that legislation and there are faults in this legislation. It was just a demonstration that this government, on an ongoing basis over an extended period of time, has been consistently introducing faulty legislation into this House for debate and has been riding roughshod over this side of the House in seeking to make the changes necessary to resolve that faulty legislation. This has, unfortunately, been getting us nowhere and we now find ourselves in the mess that we are in with so many pieces of legislation with faulty aspects to them. Those two aspects that I have just talked about, to do with electricity and what have you, are further examples of faulty legislation, just as this is faulty legislation.

The fault in this legislation is that the government is arguing that we should cap the retail side of water pricing without capping the wholesale side of it. The government is specifically excluding capping the cost of the wholesale side. Why is that? Because there has been an overspend and the government has to try to get the revenue back to take care of that overspend. This incompetent government overspent by billions and billions of dollars on the water grid, on the Traveston Dam debacle and on the mess of a water resource that we see on the Gold Coast. That alone cost in the order of \$400 million more than it was meant to.

The travesty in the whole mess is caused by this incompetent government. Twenty years ago the government started to ignore the problem, then 10 years ago it continued to ignore the problem, and now the government continues the mess by doing half the job in this legislation. These are not fairer water prices. Fairer water prices are long gone. The Premier said a few weeks ago, 'Today the blame game on water in South-East Queensland ends.' I have to say that the blame will never be taken from this government. It started a long time ago and it continues. A few years back, in former Premier Beattie's time, the government announced a 'new era for water in SEQ'. It was reported at the time—

A streamlined 21st century water management system for South East Queensland water was unveiled by Premier Peter Beattie and Deputy Premier Anna Bligh.

And—

The State will assume control and operate the larger water assets that hold, manufacture ... and distribute bulk water across the South East.

What the government did not say at that time was that it would also overspend—'We'll spend whatever we have to. We'll pay above the odds. We'll pay 10, 20, 30, 40 or 50 per cent above what it should cost to build these water assets.' When the government members said that, they did not also say that they would take control of these water assets. The minister said—

The bulk water price contributes to the cost of the South East Queensland Water Grid. The state does not make a profit from the water grid ...

Let us be sure to call it what it is. The government is clawing back the money it overspent on the water grid. It overspent that money in panic over the years. At the end of the day, the people are paying for this overspend and we will do so for generations to come—on top of higher fuel costs, on top of higher electricity costs and on top of all the other costs that have escalated under the management of this incompetent government. Elderly Queenslanders are being denied rebates on solar power because of faulty legislation, and here we go again with more faulty legislation. The government has put another piece of faulty legislation into the mix. When we move into government, this is something else that we will have to fix. We are going to fix the stuff-ups that this government has created.

I congratulate the shadow minister for his fine contribution. I urge all members on both sides of the House to go online and support the petition that I have sponsored to freeze wholesale water prices.