




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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DISASTER READINESS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.40 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. Our recommendation as a committee is for the bill to be passed. In that respect, it is clear that there is bipartisan support across our committee in relation to that. The bill is an omnibus bill that amends a number of acts: the Water Act 2000, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007, the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008, the Disaster Management Act 2003, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. It is worth taking a moment to consider the amount of effort put in by the committee to address this, given the number of acts that were being amended and the breadth of the work that needed to be done to cover the various issues that needed to be addressed. It is also worth noting that this bill is the first to be debated that has been reviewed by the Finance and Administration Committee. Our support staff did an exceptional job in pulling the whole thing together.

The bill is regarded as an urgent bill due to the wet season being upon us. Among other things, the amendments are intended to make it clear that the chief executive can include in dam safety conditions a requirement about giving general flood information to residents immediately downstream from dams. I would like to reinforce some comments made by the member for Mudgeeraba in relation to the need to give that information. Of course, giving that information is extremely important. It is absolutely imperative to be able to give that information to people living downstream. There are 108 referable dams that need to be addressed. Some of those dams are owned by mining companies, others are owned by local governments and some are privately owned. In fact, eight, or around seven per cent, of the dams are privately owned. It is absolutely imperative. We spent quite a bit of time discussing this type of system. We discussed whether any consideration had been given, for example, to having in place the old siren when something very untoward, unexpected or different to what is normally expected is happening. At the end of the day, if everything else is wiped out, maybe we could fall back on those old sirens that are cranked out—spinning the siren—to let everyone downstream know that something is happening.

Towards the end of one of the public hearings that we held we asked the question of various witnesses about the issue of cost and so forth because the Queensland Farmers Federation had indicated some concern in that regard. The LGAQ representative was quick to point out that there were some concerns from the perspective of the councils. There are quite a few council owned dams around the state. The example was given that the individual electronic warning devices that may be considered to be used in alerting communities downstream come with a cost, and it is an ongoing cost. The example that was given was of the need for a council to put in place 20 sites. Each one of these electronic devices is estimated to cost something like \$50,000. So we have a spend of about \$1 million just to put in place the actual devices. Of course, it is the local members of the community—ultimately, the ratepayers in the community—who are responsible for meeting that cost. Then there is the ongoing cost of looking after these devices. There is no point placing them out in the bush, leaving them and hoping to goodness they will work next time something untoward happens. There is the ongoing cost of putting somebody on the roads in a four-wheel drive. There is the cost of the equipment, the cost of the four-wheel drive itself and the cost of the person's salary and living away from home allowance because some of these devices are very remote. One

particular council indicated that it could add two per cent to the base rates of that local community. That was of concern to us. It was interesting that it was brought up. I hope it can be addressed. We have to be cautious that we do not penalise individual councils beyond their capacity to manage the cost of these individual devices.

Another area of concern that was discussed related to repairs of roads. Of course, community infrastructure, roads and other facilities come under this bill. The question was asked about repairs to private roads as opposed to public roads. On occasions there would be situations, especially out west, where a local road is written off, wiped out and unable to be traversed. No amount of repair can be done to it because it is going to be under water for the next few weeks, months or whatever. It may very well be that the only way through is via a private road on one or more of the larger properties around that particular area. The question was asked whether the bill would cover the repair of private roads in emergency situations. Following some communication from the department, we are now satisfied that, where the life or health of a person is at risk, then an exemption is already in place to allow for emergency repairs. Certainly it was worth asking the question just to be sure, and that is what the committee system is all about—going through these issues, checking them off and ensuring that all of these possible scenarios that may not be thought about are covered.

Other matters have been well and truly addressed by other members of the committee. I congratulate the chair on the way he conducted the committee in relation to this particular matter. Of course, other members of the House have well and truly addressed many of the other issues. I will leave my comments at that other than to reiterate what I said earlier. I thank our committee researchers for their outstanding effort—and I am sure they were burning the midnight oil—in making sure that this bill was ready to go. I think it has taken something like 11 days, if we exclude weekends, to turn the whole thing around, including two hearings. As I said, a lot of work has been done by our committee research team. I congratulate them. The bill is about protecting people and property. I think this bill does go a long way towards that end.