




Speech by

Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2012

WATER LEGISLATION (DAM SAFETY AND WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (9.00 pm): I rise to support the Water Legislation (Dam Safety and Water Supply Enhancement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill has several purposes: to amend the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008; to amend the Water Act 2000; and to amend the Electricity Act 1994. Firstly I want to discuss the aspects of the bill in relation to dam safety. This bill has been prepared to implement our legislative response to the final report released by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, which focused on a broad range of matters relating to the devastating 2010-11 floods. Our government fully supports all recommendations relevant to state government responsibilities and we are committed to working with all levels of government and the community to improve future disaster preparedness.

As the Wivenhoe Dam and the Somerset Dam are located within the wonderful electorate of Nanango, I have taken a keen interest in the benefits of this legislation. The impacts of the flood event were devastating for all involved, none more so than the constituents of the Nanango electorate who live downstream of the Wivenhoe Dam wall. The results of water releases were horrendous and today many still live with the destruction caused by the mass of water which flooded this area. For their sake, I believe it is important that our government has responded to recommendations that make necessary legislative changes before the impending wet season.

The legislative amendments being mentioned today will support nine of the recommendations made by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry relating to dam safety and flood mitigation. Importantly, they will ensure that owners of referable dams have an emergency action plan. They will ensure dam owners submit flood event reports and emergency event reports within 30 days of a flood. They will also ensure dams will be operated under a flood mitigation manual and they will streamline the declaration of temporary full-supply levels for flood mitigation dams to mitigate potential emergencies. These amendments will have great benefits for our community, in particular creating greater peace of mind that our dams are being well managed at all times and that we will be much better prepared for when and if the next flood does come.

This bill also provides for a reduction in the regulatory burden. The bill extends the due date for recycled water management plans for providing an exemption from doing a plan by one year for recycled water schemes supplying for lower risk users and provides exemptions for small non-urban service providers from certain regulatory requirements. We are doing our bit to get out of the way of business so that the job can get done.

The other part of this bill which I wish to discuss relates to the changes to the Electricity Act with regard to the Solar Bonus Scheme. In June our government announced changes to the Solar Bonus Scheme to help limit the rapidly escalating cost and its contribution to increasing electricity bills across Queensland. This issue is particularly important throughout our state but particularly in my electorate of Nanango, where at the moment we are facing the imminent closure of two of our power generators at the Tarong Power Station and the loss of many jobs. There are several reasons for this closure, with the main

one being the oversupply of electricity in Queensland. One may ask: why has this horrendous issue come to bear? That is because of our falling electricity demand. I am extremely disappointed with this announcement, but I understand the reasons and the economic reasons why the board has been left with little other choice but to make this decision. I hope that a reduction in costs now will shore up the viability in the long term, ensuring that it remains an integral part of the South Burnett community.

Unfortunately the Solar Bonus Scheme, like other Labor schemes, has played a part in this decision to put the two generators into cold storage. The Solar Bonus Scheme has resulted in an oversupply of electricity in the market. Since this scheme was introduced, more than 185,000 households all over Queensland have invested in solar panels. We understand that many people did their sums on a feed-in tariff of 44c and the government has ensured that existing customers and those who signed up before 30 June 2012 will still receive this generous rate. However, all new customers will now receive an 8c feed-in tariff for all surplus electricity supplied to Queensland's electricity network. The Solar Bonus Scheme has done its job. It has made solar power more affordable for Queenslanders, but what about the people who cannot afford solar power? I also believe that our government should not continue a policy agenda that subsidises the power bills of those who can afford solar over those who cannot. For example, pensioners, single-income families and students who cannot afford to participate in the scheme have been directly impacted by rising electricity costs not felt by those with solar. They will be the beneficiaries through the curbing of this costly scheme. These are the battlers that Labor simply forgot.

The impact of the carbon tax has also hit us again. Our coal fired power generators and stations—Tarong—have suffered a \$1.1 billion write-down since the carbon tax was implemented. Unlike Victoria, which receives compensation from the Commonwealth for its dirty brown electricity generators, Queenslanders do not receive one cent in compensation from our coal generators.

A government member: Shame!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is a shame. I want to thank the minister for bringing this bill to the House and I thank the committee that worked on this bill. I commend this bill to the House.