




Speech by
Desley Scott

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard Tuesday, 10 July 2012

SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND WATER (DISTRIBUTION AND RETAIL RESTRUCTURING) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (12.22 pm): I rise to oppose this legislation, which will do nothing for the cost of living. The LNP claim that this bill will result in lower water bills. However, they have provided no evidence that the distribution and retail water entities would pass on any possible savings to consumers. Nor has the LNP been able to provide any evidence that this legislation will actually result in any savings. This is another failed plank of the LNP's fast crumbling election platform of cost-of-living promises. The LNP promised Queenslanders to cut the cost of living by \$330 during the election campaign. After walking away from car registration savings of \$15 to \$20 and their electricity price promise of \$120, they are now also running from their water bill promise to save \$80. Instead, this legislation seeks to go back to the core of what Liberals do.

This legislation is without precedence and without consultation. It removes workers' employment conditions including travel entitlements and security of employment. In the government's own words, there was no consultation with workers and their representatives before the legislation was introduced. The director-general confirmed that there had been no consultation despite the fact that this bill strips workers of existing rights and conditions.

There was ample time for the committee to hold a public hearing, as outlined in the dissenting report from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but, despite a two-week break from parliament, no public hearing was held to seek the views of the very people this bill affects directly. This bill retrospectively legislates away the SEQ Distribution and Retail Water Reform Workforce Framework and the SEQ Distribution and Retail Water Retransfer Workforce Framework. If this legislation had not been introduced, the SEQ Distribution and Retail Water Reform Workforce Framework would have expired on 30 June next year and the SEQ Distribution and Retail Water Retransfer Workforce Framework on 30 June 2015. This means that thousands of employees in the water distribution and retail entities and hundreds in local government will now no longer have certainty of their employment conditions. It means people who entered financial commitments on the assumption of maintaining their existing conditions will now be put under strain.

There is no acknowledgement that people calculate their household budget on the basis of their employment conditions—their mortgage or rent or car expenses. What is completely unfair to these families is for core elements of these agreements to be unilaterally stripped away, leaving them with grave uncertainty and real questions as to how they will meet their living expenses. It is also another broken promise by the Premier, who prior to the election promised that he would consult with unions to achieve the best outcomes for workers. Unions were only notified of this legislation as it was introduced.

The minister in his speech then informed the parliament of the possible cost savings benefits to Unitywater. Obviously the minister has consulted with the employer but not the employees. Of course what the minister will not tell us is how many job losses are assumed in these savings, nor are there any prepared by the government. The LNP's recent industrial relations changes drastically undercut the ability of workers to negotiate for a fair outcome in good faith. As hurtful and damaging as those extreme changes

are for upcoming negotiations, it is even more outrageous to strip workers of rights and conditions that were already negotiated and signed off. This is another example of the LNP attacking the pay and conditions of working Queenslanders. It is another example of their basic lack of care and empathy for people. They see this bill as dealing with numbers on a page with no recognition that they are ripping away the livelihoods of workers and their families. We will be opposing the bill.