




Speech by  
**John Grant**

**MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD**

Hansard Thursday, 29 November 2012

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## **SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND WATER (RESTRUCTURING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr GRANT** (Springwood—LNP) (4.14 pm): I rise to speak in support of the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Indeed, I could not contain myself when I saw some of these recent amendments coming through and wish to thank the minister sincerely for the amendment that he is putting through in this bill today.

Before I get into the substance of some of those amendments, I cannot but speak on this momentous and historic occasion. I have spent many years following this topic. To say that I am disgusted with former ministers responsible for water supply would be an understatement. Indeed, back in around 2007 our city and the people of my electorate contributed their part to about a \$12 million annual bill to purchase bulk water because in Logan we have no dams to store it. That was when things started really getting off track with the previous Labor government. We started hearing talk of the cost of water doubling, and we were shocked and horrified. I did a calculation on the former Labor government's handling of this topic—they publicly advertised their price path—and I found that from 2007 to 2017 their advertised price path was going to see the price of bulk water for my residents, my constituents, increase by over 430 per cent.

Part of the atrocious mismanagement of former ministers meant that money was wasted—completely wasted. Take, for example, just the desalination plant. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on that plant that would have produced water at 10 times the price of drinking water. The planning in water supply was lacking. The levels of water got so low because over 20 years insufficient attention was given to the provision of infrastructure. Things got off track and the consequences are being paid for by all of us. That is just a little bit of background.

With respect to the amendments, I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without quickly putting on the record for the benefit of those involved, especially those who have lobbied me heavily in my electorate, some of the strong thoughts that I have. I mention in particular Sonja Hardy from the Springwood electorate and all the lobbying that she has done on the issue of choice with regard to fluoridation. I would like to mention and put on record my appreciation of Jason Woodforth, Michael Trout, Rosemary Menkens and Steve Bennett for the work that they have done in working within the party to raise this issue of choice. After all, the people simply want choice rather than copping sweep mass compulsory medication.

Some of the amendments that have come through which I am so happy to put on the record today include the repeal of section 7, which imposes the mandatory obligation on a public potable water supplier to fluoridate the relevant potable public water supply for which they are responsible. That will at least be taken away. That mandatory obligation to fluoridate potable water will be repealed. The next amendment is the insertion of a new section in part 3 to empower local governments to decide whether or not the drinking water supplied to members of the public within a community in their local government area should be fluoridated. Thirdly, there is the insertion of a new section in part 3 to require that a public potable water

supplier responsible for the supply of drinking water to a community within a local government area must fluoridate, or cease fluoridating, the water supply if this is the decision of the local government.

Logan and the people of Springwood are in a difficult situation. They must buy all of their water, and they buy it in the condition it is in when it is pumped into their city, so they have the complication of negotiating with those who currently dose our water with fluoride. I want to put on the record a few of the points given to us on hot issues. These are just stand-alone statements for the information of the people in my electorate.

Firstly, after further consideration of the proposed amendments and in light of the representations made to the government it has been decided to remove the mandatory obligation to fluoride from the act. This decision reflects the government's overarching policy objective of empowering local governments to make decisions in the best interests of their communities.

Secondly, local governments are best placed to assess the benefits and disadvantages of implementing fluoridation or continuing to fluoridate water supplies in their area. The Queensland government will be able to provide local governments with credible information on the benefits of fluoridation and the details of the funding arrangements for the installation of fluoride-dosing infrastructure.

Thirdly, the water board or other entity responsible for the water supply is required to act on the relevant local government's decision. In other words, when a local government determines it is in the best interests of the community to commence or cease fluoridation, the entity responsible for supplying drinking water must give effect to the local government's decision. However, any additional cost to the water board or water authority associated with giving effect to the local government's decision must be borne by the local government.

Lastly, those local governments that have up to now invested in drinking water fluoridation infrastructure in good faith and that subsequently determine that it is not in the best interests of their community to continue fluoridation will still be able to claim eligible capital costs back from the Queensland Fluoridation Capital Assistance Program, as long as claims are submitted in sufficient time for reimbursement to take place before 30 June 2014.

I pass on my sincere appreciation to the minister responsible for these amendments. I believe that these decisions that will pass through the House today will bring great joy to many residents in my electorate.