




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.04 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Amendment Bill to put on record the effects felt by the people of the Coomera electorate. The Coomera electorate stretches from Eagleby in the north to Helensvale in the south—everything on the eastern side of the M1. Some would say that the electorate of Coomera is where heaven meets earth. In fact, I may have said that more than once myself. It certainly is a great place to live. But the experience we have had in recent years in my electorate is the effect of the previous Labor government on the cost of living. Here is an opportunity for us in this place to right a wrong that was done so many years ago.

Billions of dollars have been overspent in South-East Queensland. We had a desalination plant that was five times over budget. We had a water grid that was being built on a cost-plus basis. Oh, to have one of those contracts—a guaranteed profit for the companies that take on those contracts. When asked how much it will cost, they say, 'Don't worry about it, Minister. It is just going to be cost-plus. Whatever it costs us, we will add a little bit on for ourselves. Is that okay?' No worries and off they go. What a wonderful opportunity for businesses to gouge the people of South-East Queensland in building something that was unneeded in the long run, that was ill thought through in the short term and that was rushed.

In South-East Queensland, in the Coomera electorate in particular, we have high unemployment. We have pressures on every aspect of the cost of living. This particular area is one that has been a bugbear for all of the people of South-East Queensland for so long. We had Disconex Allconnex on the Gold Coast. It was almost riot conditions at times over what this government imposed on the people of the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland, in the way it structured the water entities. It is one thing to talk about employees' rights. That is all very well—employees rights are important—but imbalance is something we cannot afford. Imbalance is what the current opposition—those north-west of Springwood—tells us is an imbalance and unfairness for employees. The people of South-East Queensland, the people who live in the Coomera electorate, are some of those employees. They are unemployed or underemployed because of the previous government's acts and reactions that created such heartache for so many people.

We have to bring things back to a commercial reality. That is the bottom line. We have unneeded employees in a guaranteed employment scenario. It is unheard of in Western society to simply guarantee a job for people. It is unheard of to simply say, 'Listen, mate. Even if we haven't got a job for you, we guarantee that you will have a job for the next couple of years. Is that okay?' We cannot simply give the thumbs up and say, 'That's no worries. You'll be right, mate. Don't worry, we'll find something for you to do even if it is to play cards.'

I said that I was going to make a small contribution to this debate. I simply want to make this point: my constituents would deride me if I did not stand up and defend them against an opposition that would argue that we as a society just need to keep on overpaying for our water.

The two mandatory frameworks that apply to the current bill are employees of the 10 South-East Queensland councils who transferred to the SEQ distributor-retailers Allconnex Water, Queensland Urban Utilities and Unitywater generally in 2010 and employees of Allconnex Water transferring back to the water businesses of the Gold Coast, Logan and Redland city councils at 30 June 2012. This bill is intended to remove inequities for all of society, to remove the unfairness for all of society, for all of the people of South-East Queensland and in particular from my perspective for the people of the Coomera electorate. The rights of the workers are important, but the rights of the constituents must overrule those rights of the workers in this case. They cannot keep on paying and paying and paying and hang the cost, and that is what they have had foisted on them for the last two decades under a Labor government. It has to stop. It will stop. Under this government we will bring common sense back to the community and common sense back to business and things will be commercially realistic. I commend the bill to the House.