




Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

GASFIELDS COMMISSION BILL

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (5.25 pm): I, too, rise to speak in support of the Gasfields Commission Bill 2012. As colleagues who have spoken before me have said, this bill formally establishes the GasFields Commission as an independent statutory authority and gives the commission the teeth to do its job.

Queensland is a state rich in energy and resources, as the member for Toowoomba North just explained, but a prosperous and well-managed resources sector is therefore critical to the economic wellbeing and the future of our great state. As the environment minister and as a father, it is important to me that our resources are developed in a way that contributes to our economic prosperity but that it is done in a way that achieves balance in protecting our environment and in protecting other industries, particularly our agricultural industry.

The bill provides the GasFields Commission with the powers and functions necessary to achieve its goals of managing and improving co-existence. The commission's powers include the ability to compel government agencies, landholders, gas companies and contractors to provide information. This means that the GasFields Commission will have the evidence it needs to properly understand the issues affecting communities and industry and make informed recommendations about how co-existence can be improved.

I can honestly say that since April last year the GasFields Commission has been very hard at work. One of the first interactions I and my department had with the commission was through its assistance in the review of the CSG water management policy. At the outset I acknowledge John Cotter and Andrew, one of his staff who in particular spent many hours working with my department but more so with landholders, with the agricultural associations and with the industry groups themselves. Appropriate management of CSG water is important to make sure that impacts on the environment are managed and to ensure the water is used in a way that reflects its value as a resource. The commission provided strategic input and, as I said, worked with peak bodies from both the agricultural and the resources sectors to achieve what I would say is more than a 90 per cent consensus from industry and irrigator groups alike.

The end result was a CSG water management policy that provides certainty for landowners and for the wider community as well as the resource companies themselves. It encourages industry to use CSG water in a way that protects the environment and maximises its productive use as a valuable resource. CSG companies are urged to re-use water in a way that is beneficial to local landholders, water-dependent industry and the environment. And after all feasible beneficial use options have been considered, CSG water must then be treated and disposed of in a way that minimises impacts on the environment. I thank the commission for its work in this space as well as for its ongoing advice—the ongoing advice that it provides to me and to the Environment and Heritage Protection portfolio—particularly on how to better communicate its role as a regulator in managing groundwater issues under chapter 3 of the Water Act. I know that this bill will ensure that the excellent work the commission has done will continue into the future. I commend the bill to the House.