




Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

LAND, WATER AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (5.06 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Land, Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. The bill contains amendments reflecting a number of the Queensland government's commitments, including several matters that are relevant to the Environment and Heritage Protection portfolio. In particular, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the many red-tape reduction benefits that are contained in this bill.

The bill removes the requirement for a licence to interfere for diversion of a watercourse on a mine site, instead relying on conditioning under the environmental authority. Currently, a mine operator needs approval under both the Water Act and the Environmental Protection Act to manage watercourse diversions. This bill removes the need for an approval under the Water Act, as each mine's environmental authority can be conditioned to adequately address the management of watercourse diversions. This will apply to all resource activities, saving industry time and money whilst still upholding strong environmental standards. Other red-tape reduction benefits included the removal of the requirement under the Water Act to obtain a riverine protection permit, as this will be managed under the Vegetation Management Act. This means that potential duplication in applying for a permit to remove vegetation in a watercourse, lake or spring can be avoided.

The bill amends section 20 of the Water Act 2000 to allow additional low-risk activities to be undertaken without a water entitlement. Low-risk activities are those that pose minimal risk to the sustainable management of the water resource if undertaken without a resource entitlement. These include traditional or cultural purposes, as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier just spoke about; minor consumptive take for activities such as dairy or weed wash down—and as the member for Glass House, I acknowledge and applaud this move by the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines as a number of my constituents, particularly dairy farmers in my electorate, will applaud this amendment; the take of water by a constructing authority or water service provider to operate public showers or toilets; and the take of water for firefighting, including the testing of firefighting equipment. That is an eminently sensible amendment. Further amendments to the Water Act will provide far greater flexibility when publishing public notices about water planning and water management activities.

This typically would involve publishing a notice in a newspaper, publishing a gazette notice or, in some instances, placing information online or announcements on the radio. With the decline in newspaper readership, increasing uptake of alternative information resources and the fact that owners of land do not necessarily reside on that land or even in that state, these are not necessarily the most effective methods for informing interested parties. Since the inclusion of the publishing requirements, a vast array of electronic communication methodologies have been adopted in common usage by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the Department of Energy and Water Supply and my Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and by the community at large. The bill amends the definition of 'publish' to provide the departments with the flexibility to tailor the

notification method to the intended audience, easing the regulatory burden on departments and clients by enabling the most effective methods of publication to be used.

This bill offers a further substantial contribution to the LNP government's commitment to cut red tape and regulation by 20 per cent. These benefits are in addition to the green-tape reduction amendments that I brought before the House last year which have recently commenced. The green-tape reduction reforms have changed the face of environmental licensing in Queensland and are estimated to save up to \$20 million in costs of approvals of which over \$18 million are savings to business. I am pleased to say that obtaining environmental approvals in Queensland is now more simple and affordable in order to support strong economic growth without compromising environmental standards. I commend the bill to the House.