




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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WATER SUPPLY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (10.44 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. In particular I would like to address the amendments made by the bill to the regulation of water service provision. This government has a priority to cut red tape and cut costs. This bill achieves these goals and, in line with the draft Queensland Plan, it moves the focus of water industry regulation from process to outcomes for Queensland communities and outcomes for Queensland businesses.

The water and sewerage service providers themselves will benefit from these changes too through increased transparency and accountability that will drive collaboration and improved performance through reduced business costs. Queensland has around 86 providers, most of which are local governments, delivering drinking water and sewerage services to communities. About another 80 providers deliver non-drinking water to customers operating mostly in the agricultural and mining sectors. Queensland communities and businesses cannot continue to grow without efficient essential services like water and sewerage, and the current regulatory framework is not up to the task. Industry wants change. Industry says the current framework is costing time and money and does not support the individual business needs of the service provider or properly identify or address their specific risks. National reports and department assessments also support the need for reform.

Good planning around infrastructure and water security will remain important to water businesses; the difference is that regulation will not dictate how this occurs. Instead, the focus of regulation will be on monitoring outcomes, not processes. This will provide business monitoring, drive continual improvement and increase accountability to customers. The new framework answers water industry calls over many years to simplify and improve how they are regulated. The Department of Energy and Water Supply will publish a comparative report on industry performance so that customers and councils can see how their services measure up and to provide incentive for providers to improve. The report will also help drive improved performance planning and infrastructure management to ensure that water infrastructure lasts and fits the state's growing population—in line with the draft Queensland Plan.

The bill transforms the regulatory framework applying to water service providers to focus on outcomes rather than the process. Key features of the transformed framework are annual performance reporting by providers and publication by the Department of Energy and Water Supply of a comparative report of industry performance and outcome based regulation of lower exposed recycled water schemes. Current regulation of water service providers under the water supply act is burdensome, has not improved asset management or water security outcomes and does not adequately seek to address risks.

The LGAQ and industry bodies support the move away from process monitoring and compliance to public performance reporting and stronger business responsibility and accountability. Also being removed is the requirement in the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 for

service providers to provide residential tenants with water consumption advice. This will remove some unnecessary red tape for water businesses without disadvantaging tenants who, if they pay for the water they consume, receive this information directly from landlords.

Finally, the new framework will require service providers to consult and come to an agreement with their communities on the level of service they are provided. The resulting customer service standards will be a public document. The new framework has been designed in close consultation with the industry, and that is why the peak industry groups like the Local Government Association and the Water Directorate have been so supportive in their submissions on the bill. The Local Government Association of Queensland has called it a great step forward in reducing complexity and cost and increasing transparency. Of course the new framework will require transition and support. The government will have a key role in supporting all service providers, particularly small and Indigenous providers, in making this transition.

We have also committed to continuing to work with the industry into the future so that outcomes of the framework can be used to inform better decision making at a local, regional and state level. I congratulate the staff on the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee. We have a wonderful group of staff with Erin, Margaret, Mary and Dianne. Without their support, we would struggle to do the work we do. They are wonderful and very organised people. Thank you, ladies, for your support. I support this bill.