




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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WATER REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (10.10 pm): I rise to speak on the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. This bill presumably joins a catalogue of legislation that has come through this parliament to precipitate or facilitate more mining industry development in this state, and that is a notion which I am ordinarily strongly in favour of, provided that it does not inadvertently impact other users or conflict with the same resources. With the combination of the Mineral Resources Act, the Petroleum and Gas Act and the application of these licences, I share deep concerns about how this will play out for a lot of landholders who rely on our vital water resources west of the Great Divide.

As people would be acutely aware, from the First Australians onwards we have had very little groundwater and we rely on our subartesian and artesian water supplies. They are very precious and they are very complex systems. In the Lawn Hill Gorge in my area—and I do not know how on earth they do this—they have proven that the water that comes down the Lawn Hill Gorge is sourced from Papua New Guinea. That is fascinating and it demonstrates that they are enormously complex underground water systems.

One of the only real mining conflicts that I have had in my area in recent times has been with Ernest Henry Mining. The Curley family had a considerable conflict with the mine over groundwater because they were assured that it was not going to affect their groundwater supply. No end of tension was precipitated between that landholder and the mine, and I am sure that the mine had the best of intentions, valued their relationship with the landholder, probably did not foresee it as a problem and found it very hard to satisfy their needs or 'make good' as is talked about in this legislation.

There is a large amount of mining to go into the Galilee Basin, which also requires large amounts of water. We are a dry continent and we have more dams, but we do have limited water resources and there can be a lot of tension between those water users, as we are all acutely aware, during the punishing drought which we are experiencing. As has been expressed by a lot of landholders and their interest groups, there is a hell of a lot of risk to groundwater supplies associated with this bill. They are very complex systems and we still do not know a lot about how they interact. People have an inherent distrust of governments—not just this government, but any government—saying, 'You'll be right, mate. We'll look after you. We'll make good and so will the mining companies.' That is a shame, but there has been a litany of poor outcomes and maybe we should reflect on the Coral Creek issue with Garry Reed. I think he would argue that the legislation did not serve him very well in regards to how he was treated and how water rights affected his property.

On that basis I have extreme concerns about messing around with the precious water reserves and supplies that exist. I know there is going to be considerable demand and it would be great to have development in the Galilee Basin, but what is the inadvertent cost and what are the risks? The landholders have taken such a beating with the accelerated growth of coal seam gas and coalmining. It is good to enjoy the fruits of that growth, but we have to consider the inadvertent cost to our existing

industries. We know that coalmining is where the money is, and in this sort of playground in parliament and in government decisions they are always going to win the day and we have to work very hard to protect their interests. To me this is a shift in the balance towards the mining companies away from the landholders, and on that basis I will not be supporting the bill.