




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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**SUSTAINABLE PLANNING (INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (7.44 pm): I rise to speak to the Sustainable Planning (Infrastructure Charges) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The explanatory notes state—

The Sustainable Planning (Infrastructure Charges) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (the Bill) provides for the establishment of a long-term local infrastructure planning and charging framework in Queensland that supports local government and distributor-retailer (local authority) sustainability and development feasibility.

In Queensland, local authorities are responsible for the provision of local infrastructure networks, including: Roads; water; wastewater; stormwater; and parks and land for community facilities. However, where a local government is a participating local government of a distributor-retailer they are only responsible for the provision of infrastructure for stormwater, parks and roads, with the distributor-retailer responsible for water and wastewater infrastructure provision. This infrastructure is necessary to manage growth and provide for new development in local communities. Local authorities levy infrastructure charges and impose infrastructure conditions on new development to contribute to the cost of providing this infrastructure.

There is no doubt about it, besides health, sustainable planning and infrastructure, development is probably the most important portfolio within government. We talk about sustainable planning and infrastructure. We need to ensure that whatever we build is sustainable and cost effective. Likewise, we should not invest billions of dollars or millions of dollars into projects that result from a political decision.

I know that in the past we had nation builders who played a big part in our country. The Snowy Mountains scheme is an example. Dams and power stations were built and beef roads opened up. I cannot recall the name of the dam around Bundaberg—I think it may be Paradise Dam—but I think it was the last dam built in Queensland. One of the big dams built was the Burdekin Dam. That was a massive project.

The explanatory notes further state under the heading ‘Approvals bilateral—State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971’—

Queensland is seeking accreditation of provisions of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* ... as an authorisation process for the purposes of a proposed approvals bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth Government for environmental assessment and approvals under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* ...

This provision relating to bilateral agreements between the state and federal governments is very relevant with regard to the Burdekin Dam project. It was a massive project. Many people were behind the project—the farmers, the irrigators, the water board and the Bjelke-Petersen government. I recall that there was a federal election taking place at the time. I remember that Sir Joh flew over the area and had a lot of communication with the lobbyists to push this massive scheme.

There was a Commonwealth election campaign in 1983 and the issue at that time was the building of the Burdekin Dam. The state government saw that the scale of the project was such that it could not be funded. They brought the federal government on board. Ted Lindsay was running for the seat of Herbert. The first thing they said to him was, ‘What are you going to do? Are you going to

support the Burdekin Dam project?' Ted Lindsay ended up winning the seat. In the end there was a combined state and federal contribution to that dam.

This bill has been introduced. Previous members have spoken about Traveston Dam. That was not built. I cannot recall the name of the dam built near Bundaberg. The Burdekin Dam is the main dam that was built, and there has really been nothing else built since then.

Then there was a water crisis in the south-east corner. In terms of that water crisis, the Labor government was in power and did very little in relation to water infrastructure. It did nothing in regard to water infrastructure. Then we had a drought year in year out and the south-east corner was on water restrictions continually. Peter Beattie, the then Premier, knew that he had to do something about water because they had embraced the no new dams policy, the no water infrastructure policy. So he flew over Traveston and he put his hand on his heart and said, 'I will build my dam there.' But many lives were ruined as a result of that decision.

That decision was not about providing water because building a dam there had been rejected by Wayne Goss, it had been rejected by the Borbidge government and it had also been rejected by SunWater because it would be a multibillion dollar project and would provide very little water because, as members said previously, it would be a shallow dam. A lot of money was spent in buying up all of those blocks. So a decision to continue with that dam would have seen not only more lives ruined but billions of dollars of taxpayers' money wasted on a project that was all about setting a perception about doing something about water infrastructure in the south-east corner. It was about saving the political hide of the Premier at the time.

When it comes to the clauses in this legislation that remove the safeguards, the checks and balances, of the federal government, we do not want to get to a point where the government says, 'We are the LNP now. We would not do anything like that,' because that is not the case. People out there just do not trust governments. A lot of decisions are made that are political decisions. As I said, had there not been a need to change the government from the Fraser government to the Hawke government, we may not have had the Burdekin Dam. I believe the push to have that dam was very great, very powerful, but we also needed federal government funding to build that dam. Bob Hawke came up to Townsville and they asked him, 'What are you going to do about the dam?' He knew that he needed the support of Townsville and he needed that seat to take government.

There is an element of good legislation here but there is also a concern about removing those checks and balances. In terms of Traveston Dam, we were fortunate that the federal government stepped in and overrode the state Labor government at the time. They did that because they could see the viability side of it and the environmental side of it and likewise what it would do to the Mary Valley. There were a hell of a lot of protesters, and it also paved the way for a number of members of parliament to win their seat on the back of the anxiety that this issue had caused. It also cost the then member for Noosa. She was very much anti dam and ended up causing a lot of controversy in her own party because she could see that this project was not the right thing for the south-east corner.

So, yes, there is some good legislation here—there is some good policy—but there is a big concern about removing the safeguards, the checks and balances. We need to ensure that we have those in place. Like the member for Nicklin was saying, we do not have an upper house. Previously we had those checks and balances and, without them, the people of Queensland would have seen a multimillion dollar project that was a waste of money go ahead, and it would have provided very little benefit to Queensland, to ratepayers. It would have cost millions of dollars but it would also have cost ratepayers millions of dollars. That history needs to be brought to the attention of the House—the history behind decisions that were made on political grounds, trying to save a government's political hide. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.

*(Time expired)*