




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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**MOTION: WATER REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT ACT
2014**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (6.11 pm): I rise to support the motion before the House moved by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps. It is essential to the future of agriculture in Queensland for us in this House to work with our regional producers and landholders to ensure that we are enablers and not stand in the way of the state's vital agriculture industry. One project alone in the Etheridge shire could create some 1,250 jobs.

The Water Act 2000 has remained basically unchanged since 2000. That is why our LNP government worked hard with all the sectors and introduced the water reform bill that importantly set a new direction for water management in Queensland.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Dr Lynham interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. The member for Hinchinbrook and Minister, I ask you to cease your discussion across the chamber.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Essentially, the new purpose of the act recognises the importance of sustaining ecosystem health, water quality and water dependent ecological processes and biological diversity associated with catchments, watercourses, lakes, springs and aquifers. The bill provided for the establishment of water development options simply to allow for investment in the future of new, irrigated agricultural projects.

While the water development option gives proponents the certainty they need to secure investors into projects to enable management of time frames, it is not a right to take water or to develop infrastructure. This does not mean weakening the scientific rigour required to meet the Water Act and the EIA requirements. Further, a comprehensive community consultation process is conducted before any action is taken to grant water authorisations or amend any existing water plan. The provisions of the bill clearly provide for science and hydrology as part of any new water allocation. This simply means that water projects can get going sooner, driving economic growth and creating jobs.

The LNP has a clear focus when it comes to the future of agriculture and we are very proud to support this vital industry. Agriculture is and will always be the backbone of the Queensland economy, but not if this current government does not understand the importance of this change and the detrimental impact it will have to Northern Queensland.

It is simple: we are enabling agricultural investors access to sustainable water to grow crops, maybe feed some cattle, most importantly, employ some people and, very importantly, improve the livelihood of our regional communities like Georgetown. It was interesting to hear in the House this morning the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland say she is behind this. It is disappointing that she has not spoken to some of the proponents. She would then see how important it is for North Queensland.

Just a few weeks ago I visited the area around Georgetown and had the opportunity to sit down and listen to members of the Etheridge Shire Council. They acknowledged that the Etheridge Shire Council area has enormous potential when it comes to agriculture projects. All we are hearing now is that these much needed agricultural irrigation projects are on the backburner for a couple of months until they are looked into.

We are not looking into the fact that these proponents want to employ people. They want to grow crops. They want to increase development in northern Australia. I do not think it is a laughing matter at all. The uncertainty in and around North Queensland because of this new Labor government mirrors the uncertainty across the state around these projects. The changes that this House endorsed were designed to provide certainty to proponents.

This motion is simply about enabling agriculture in the north of this state—to kickstart an area that is renowned for its potential. As the member for Hinchinbrook stated, if those opposite are so against this why not bring an amendment before the House rather than just come in here to satisfy their Green mates. Let this House decide what is best for North Queensland.