




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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**WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
(UNDERGROUND WATER MANAGEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (9.12 pm): The member for Burleigh and the member for Hinchinbrook called the members of the committee naughty boys. I am really offended, because what about me? I will channel Beyonce in response to the member for Burleigh and the member of Hinchinbrook: 'Tonight I won't be your naughty girl. I don't know what's gotten into me. The rhythm of this debate got me feelin' so crazy. Tonight, I won't be anyone's naughty girl.' I'll call all my girls—the member for Mackay and the member for Bulimba who will be speaking later—to join with me tonight in supporting these two bills.

The member for Burleigh also had a question about ecologically sustainable development. I really think the member for Burleigh needs to learn about this great thing called Google. If he does not have an understanding about ecologically sustainable development he should pop it into Google. The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development comes up. It is the first thing that comes up when it is googled. It is a federal government strategy. It states—

Ecologically Sustainable Development ... represents one of the greatest challenges facing Australia's governments—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I cannot hear the speaker because of the unruly behaviour in the chamber.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Once again, members, we will have order.

Mrs LAUGA: The strategy states—

Ecologically Sustainable Development ... represents one of the greatest challenges facing Australia's governments, industry, business and community in the coming years.

It is a wonder that the member for Burleigh has not heard of it before. It continues—

While there is no universally accepted definition of ESD, in 1990 the Commonwealth Government suggested the following definition for ESD in Australia ...

I speak to this strategy for the benefit of the member for Burleigh and perhaps all those opposite who need enlightening in terms of what ecologically sustainable development is. It is a strategy that was created in 1990. That is quite a few years ago now. One would think that they would be up with exactly what ESD is. The ESD definition, according to the Commonwealth government, is—

- 'Using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased' ...

Put more simply, ESD is development which aims to meet the needs of Australians today, while conserving our ecosystems for the benefit of future generations. To do this, we need to develop ways of using those environmental resources which form the basis of our economy in a way which maintains and, where possible, improves their range, variety and quality. At the same time we need to utilise those resources to develop industry and generate employment.

...

Some key changes to the way we think, act and make decisions, however, will help ensure Australia's economic development is ecologically sustainable. There are two main features which distinguish an ecologically sustainable approach to development:

- we need to consider, in an integrated way, the wider economic, social and environmental implications of our decisions and actions for Australia, the international community and the biosphere; and
- we need to take a long-term rather than short-term view when taking those decisions and actions.

I table a copy of part 1 of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development for the benefit of the opposition.

Tabled paper: Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy web page titled 'National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development—Part 1 Introduction' [2036].

A government member: Or one member in particular.

Mrs LAUGA: And one member in the particular. I think they could all probably do with reading it.

I rise tonight to support the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The make-good framework was put in place in 2010 to provide landholders with statutory certainty that their rights to existing water supplies would be protected into the future. The make-good framework acknowledges the fact that for a petroleum company to access the resource it will be required to dewater an aquifer and that this has the potential to impact on other water users. The framework has been operating for quite some time now and stakeholders have raised concerns about how it has been operating. The government has listened to these concerns and acted on them in this bill.

The science of groundwater hydrology inevitably involves a degree of uncertainty. It is, however, not conscionable for a company to exploit this uncertainty and fail to deliver on its legal and moral obligation to make good their impacts on other water users. We have heard from some stakeholders that this uncertainty can lead to disputes between landholders and resource companies over the cause of a bore's impairment. This bill seeks to address this issue by making the resource company responsible for making good a bore in circumstances where it is likely that the resource company's exercise of underground water rights is the cause of the bore's impairment. In addition, if the resource company's activities are a materially contributing factor to the bores impairment, it must also make good that impact.

The bill also includes amendments to address another important issue for our landholders—free gas. Over the last couple of years, particularly in the Surat Basin in South-Western Queensland, some farmers' water bores have become more and more affected by free gas because of coal seam gas production. This free gas poses a safety risk, can damage the bore's infrastructure and can reduce the pumping capacity of a bore so much that it can no longer supply the quantity or quality water the landholder relies on.

When the make-good framework was designed in 2010 it was not anticipated that impacts from free gas would affect bore owners. Farmers have rightly pointed out that the framework does not cover this issue. Currently, under the make-good obligations of the Water Act landholders have no right to compensation for bores which become impaired by free gas.

The EPOLA bill addresses this oversight by requiring resource companies to enter into make-good agreements with landholders whose water bores have become impaired by free gas released by coal seam gas production. This is not a new obligation, rather a tailored amendment to ensure that companies live up to their social responsibility and licence.

Water is critical for farmers whether it be for stock watering, domestic purposes or irrigation. Both the resources and agricultural sectors are integral to our economy and to our communities, but both sectors can coexist. We do, however, need to ensure a level playing field and that one sector does not unduly impact the other. I commend the bill to the House.