




Speech By  
**Fiona Simpson**

**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

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

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (9.19 pm): This is a cognate debate on the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I wish to commend my colleagues—in particular, the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Moggill, as well as the member for Nanango—because in their initial presentations on behalf of the opposition they have outlined very succinctly not only the complexities of these issues but also the very real impacts that they have seen and that they have advocated for on behalf of the communities of Queensland. This is a complex area. As the member for Hinchinbrook outlined, it requires great consideration and care. It does require an understanding of the law in application and also an understanding of what it means for the communities and the economy.

Protecting the environment, ensuring the good management of water resources and supporting economic development in the agricultural and mining industries are complex and important issues. Getting the balance right is the challenge as these can be complementary interests in some areas and competing interests in others.

Opposition members are strongly committed to ensuring that the interests of landholders and regional communities are appropriately protected and that economic growth is underpinned by certainty of process. There has been an argument as to how this can be best achieved. That is essentially where the points of difference have been. However, the LNP is committed to getting the balance right and taking into account the needs of all sectors. It is also committed to ensuring management is based on science and appropriate monitoring without the ideological overlays of the Deputy Premier, Jackie Trad.

A number of amendments here are well intentioned, though. As some committee members noted, the absence of a regulatory impact statement has affected the committee's consideration of the bill. There has also been criticism of this government's lack of consultation. However, it is the retrospective elements in particular that we are concerned about. Retrospectivity has a great cost, and I do not believe that the minister has provided the assurances to the committee or to this House with regard to what the retrospective aspects of the legislation mean.

In summary, the bill makes changes to the make-good framework for the management of underground water in terms of potential impacts by resource projects. The state LNP extended landholder protections for make-good provisions while in government. While I think it is acknowledged that there are areas where more can be done, it needs to be done in a way that is based upon appropriate consultation and scientific based review. There was an extensive improvement under the measures that were put in place by the LNP in government.

With regard to the provisions in the bill, the key amendments are as follows: requiring resource companies to pay the landholder's reasonable costs in engaging a hydrogeologist for the purposes of negotiating a make-good agreement; requiring resource companies to bear the costs of any alternative dispute resolution in the make-good agreement negotiation process; inserting a cooling-off period for make-good agreements; ensuring that impacts on water bores as a result of free gas from coal seam gas extraction attract make-good obligations; and addressing issues in the make-good agreement negotiation process relating to uncertainty in the cause of bore impairment. With regard to landholders' rights, make-good arrangements are an important protection for landholders who have been affected by mining with regard to underground water.

The impacts upon the development of water infrastructure in the state have been addressed by my colleagues quite extensively, but it is worth emphasising with respect to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill. The development of water infrastructure is essential to the economic development of our state—in particular, in the north of our state where there are communities whose futures depend upon access to appropriate water infrastructure to see their regions unlocked.

There are vast parts of this state where people have not accessed mainstream economic opportunities. Everybody benefits from the fruits of economic development, but those people in the regions in particular would see an uplift in the value of their economy, in their lives and in the certainty of jobs that come about. For our friends in the north, the development of appropriate water infrastructure is absolutely essential.

To see people in some parts of our state lifted out of poverty by having access to local jobs and to see the added value to those communities of those higher value jobs is so important. That is why we are so concerned that this government has been against appropriate water infrastructure being developed in a timely way. It is one thing for them to pay lip-service, as they often do when they have meetings in the north. In reality, they are very slow to act and provide approvals and a pathway forward to see this water infrastructure actually developed. That is why we have grave concerns with regard to the legislation before the House.

Colleagues have also mentioned the concerns that have been echoed literally in the streets that projects such as the Carmichael mine and Acland stage 3, which have been through vigorous environmental assessments over a number of years, have failed to get the practical support from this government—lip-service but no action. They are great at the press releases; they are not terribly good at action. We do not want to see the government pay more lip-service; we want to see action. To see new stumbling blocks and barriers put in front of these projects that have been through rigorous assessments is just so frustrating for people who are desperate not only for their jobs but also for certainty so that they can plan for the future.

I support my colleagues in the amendments coming forward and also for the rigorous debate which is necessary to ensure that these complex issues are given air. We want to see this state develop. We do believe in getting the balance right. I do not believe that this government has the balance right.