




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (11.04 pm): I rise to speak on the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and also the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to thank the members from both committees and both ministers and departments for their work on the bills.

In regional Queensland we need to strike a balance in terms of water usage to meet the needs of industry, agriculture and the environment. One cannot sustain our state without the other. We need food, fibre, jobs from industry, farming, mining and tourism. The purpose of these two bills is to strike a balance and to preserve our water stocks for future generations. I enjoyed working with the member for Mirani to work towards supporting jobs in the region that are sustainable.

The Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will amend those provisions in the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act that are inconsistent with the government's policy and election commitments. This includes: reinstating the principles of ecologically sustainable development in the purpose of the Water Act 2000; omitting the provisions for the declaration of designated watercourses; and omitting water development option provisions in their entirety.

This bill aims to remove unnecessary regulation, improve client services, reduce costs and deliver a more efficient water allocation and management framework for Queensland. Currently, the WROLA Act does not expressly include the principles of ecologically sustainable development. There are risks to the Great Barrier Reef, the potential to overallocate water resources and an absence of public consultation prior to the issue of water development options. This needs to be amended.

The current WROLA Act includes provisions to allow the declaration of a designated watercourse used to enable the removal of the requirement for an entitlement to take or interfere with water in designated watercourses. This bill amends this provision to ensure continued appropriate regulation of watercourses.

The Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 is realising the government's election commitment to act immediately to prevent the commencement of the Newman government's water laws which will have a detrimental effect of the Great Barrier Reef catchment systems and allow for the overallocation of Queensland's water resources and the commitment to return ecologically sustainable development principles to the Water Act and remove the water development options in their entirety. This bill removes the ability to declare a designated watercourse.

The Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 will strengthen the effectiveness of the environmental assessment of underground water extraction by resource projects. It will also allow the ongoing scrutiny of the

environmental impacts of underground water extraction during the operational phase of resource projects through clear links between the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and the Water Act 2000. It will also improve the make-good framework of the Water Act 2000. This requirement will extend obligations to bores impaired by free gas. It also clarifies that make-good obligations arise where the exercise of underground water rights is likely the cause of the impairment even if there is scientific uncertainty. The resource companies will bear the costs of any alternative dispute resolution process and pay the landholders' reasonable costs in engaging a hydrologist for expert advice in negotiating a make-good agreement.

The bill will also ensure that the administering authority of the Environmental Protection Act 1994 is the decision-maker for specific applications relating to environmental authorities. It will also ensure that mining tenure approvals are appropriately assessed for their impact on the environment and underground water use and that there are opportunities for public submissions and third-party appeals provided for before underground water is taken in regulated areas for mine dewatering purposes. It will update existing provisions in the Queensland Heritage Act 1992 to provide for the appointment, by local government, of authorised persons to carry out compliance and enforcement activities for the local heritage provisions.

With the amendments flagged by the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines and the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, these bills will ensure that we get the balance right for Queensland. In the regions we need both the agriculture industry and mining as well as the jobs that they bring. I commend the bills to the House.