




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (8.41 pm): I thank the member for Cleveland for his interesting speech. I can take as good as I get from the member for Logan. If he would like to interject, I will give it straight back to him.

I, too, rise to speak to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill and the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill in this cognate debate. I will not be as succinct as the member for Hinchinbrook was in his contribution, which I think was one of the best speeches I have heard in this Queensland parliament in the five years that I have been here. The shadow minister, who was a former minister with responsibility for this issue, knows this legislation inside out. It is a real shame that those on the other side of the House do not have the knowledge of the member for Hinchinbrook. We have heard quite a few members on the other side of the House speak to this legislation. Clearly, they do not understand it.

I am going to limit my contribution to a few things in both pieces of legislation that I do not agree with because I agree with a lot of what is in them. If the member for Ipswich West would like to pay attention, I will explain that the LNP supports quite a bit of the legislation that has been introduced, but it has issues with it that were canvassed by the committee of which I was a member at the time this legislation was first introduced.

The infrastructure committee reported on the bill back in March this year. This legislation has been sitting on the *Notice Paper* for nine months. We have been wondering why it has taken this long to be debated. Obviously, it has taken that long because the Labor Party was coming up with something completely different. It was talking about one particular item and then it was off doing something completely different in legislation considered by another committee.

The issues that I take with the Water Legislation Amendment Bill relate to two matters. After the former minister changed the act, this government is taking it back to ecologically sustainable principles. The member for Hinchinbrook clearly articulated the difference between what the 2014 legislation put forward in terms of responsible and productive management of our water assets and ecologically sustainable principles. There were quite a few discussions during the committee hearing about this matter. The committee heard from a number of submitters. There were varying degrees of input from different sectors, especially the extreme Greens. As members are aware, the Labor Party is completely and utterly beholden to the extreme Greens. In fact, two members opposite are at risk of losing their seats to the Greens. That is why we keep seeing all of these pieces of green legislation coming before the House. We constantly see ministers putting forward very legitimate pieces of legislation with very good processes in place and with the right intent, but there is also another minister who is completely undoing that work and creating a whole lot of sovereign risk in this state. We really cannot afford that.

The committee heard from Dr Tim Seelig of the Wilderness Society. He said that putting the principles of ecologically sustainable development back into the legislation was 'an incredibly important point for us'. That was his contribution. There was no real explanation as to why it is incredibly important. On the other hand, the committee heard from Dr Dale Miller, who stated—

We do not have significant concerns with what is in the bill in terms of the three areas that are focused on around the re-introduction of ecologically sustainable development principles and replacing the term 'responsible and productive' with the term 'sustainable' in relation to water management.

I was interested to hear the contribution of the member for Hinchinbrook and why he had amended the legislation and inserted the words 'responsible and productive' management. I was equally interested to hear Minister Lynham's comments about why we needed to keep the principle of ecological sustainability. During the minister's speech I interjected, asking him if he could explain to me what that term was. Throughout the committee hearing I asked the same question of everybody who came before us, 'What is your definition of ecological sustainability?' I could not get anybody to explain that to me. I do not think that anybody knows what it is. The minister took the interjection, but he did not bother to explain to me what ecological sustainability is. I would be very interested to hear the minister explain to me what that term means. I wait with bated breath. I have asked these sorts of questions before without getting a response. I am glad that the minister is taking notes and we may well hear what ecological sustainability is all about. I would be very happy to hear it.

The committee did make the comment that it was unable to reach consensus on the proposed provision relating to the inclusion of principles of ecological sustainability. That is because the government members, of whom there were three, voted along the lines that the government wanted them to vote on, and the other three of us had an open mind and we disagreed with that. The lemmings over there do not have an open mind. They will follow this government and the green agenda right off the edge of the cliff.

Dr Rowan: They are beholden to the Greens.

Mr HART: I take the interjection from the honourable shadow minister. They are completely beholden to the extreme Greens. The other issue that I disagree with is the water development option. Although we have heard from some of the contributors here tonight that the committee was split on that, I can tell members, from my involvement with the committee at the time, we were not, in fact, split on that. We all agreed there needed to be some form of water development option available. The government members, again with a closed mind, completely agreed with the government, but we did manage to get them to make one recommendation and that was that the government consider an alternative. We did have three Labor members who agreed that there was a need to have an alternative to a water development option. They wanted to call it something else. I will listen intently to the other members who were on the committee at the time to see whether they disagree with that comment.

Mr Cripps: How dare they have an independent thought!

Mr HART: I take that interjection from the member for Hinchinbrook. I doubt that they will have an independent thought because they do not appear to have had one so far. The bill proposes to omit the provisions relating to a water development option on the basis that it is not consistent with the government's position due to concerns about the potential risk to the Great Barrier Reef. How often do we hear that? How often are those opposite using that as an excuse?

Mrs Lauga interjected.

Mr HART: Those members who are interjecting have the opportunity shortly to jump up and explain exactly how this will affect the Great Barrier Reef. I challenge them to give us a definitive position as to why this will affect the Great Barrier Reef. AgForce argued—

In relation to the government's decision to remove WDOs we would propose that the underlying reason for their creation, namely the need for greater certainty of access to available water for potential developers, is considered further.

That is one of the reasons I cannot support that part of the bill. There were some interesting comments made around the water development options and I would just like to read what Mr Ian Johnson from the Farmers' Federation said—

The second issue is obviously the water development option. We were not totally in favour of the water development option as it was put forward in 2014. We believe that the way it was put forward it could override a water plan. A proposal was put forward by the department in the lead-up to 2015 which allowed for a redefined water development option, which allowed for the fact that it needed to take account of a water plan. If there were some provisions that were not taken into account, then the water development option could only go ahead if the water plan was reviewed. A good case and example would be the Gulf Water Plan review. So we are coming back, we are saying the water development option has been taken off the table totally and that is not a good move. We understand that the federal government is coming forward with a number of proposals for dams. This would be an important provision in the Water Act to give a framework for that.

This government has a history of not supporting the agricultural segment of the Queensland economy. We need to look no further than the fact that we have no agricultural minister and we have not had one for a period of time—although I see somebody over there jumping around in seats so maybe there is something we have not been told yet. We will have to wait and see about that. This is important for agriculture. If we are to be the food bowl of Asia we cannot do it without water. As I said, this government has history. As Mr Johnson from the Farmers' Federation said, the federal government has a plan for dams. That plan involves \$2 billion to build dams in Northern Australia. That money becomes available on 1 July next year. The federal government has put forward just under \$20 million for feasibility studies for those dams. The minister in charge of that has delayed those feasibility studies to the point where this money may not be available. The feasibility studies may not be completed. I think the minister has actually told us that one of them will not be completed in time and therefore that money may not be available.

A government member: You're just making it up, mate.

Mr HART: Given time I can probably prove all of that, but we will move on. In conclusion, I again say that I cannot support the Water Legislation Amendment Bill because of the change away from the intent of the bill that the member for Hinchinbrook put in place in 2014 and the removal of the water development options.

I would now like to briefly speak on the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. As I said, I was on the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee. We did a reasonable amount of travelling for a number of bills and we heard from a number of farmers and property owners that they were concerned about water impacts on their property from mining processes. If the member for Ipswich West would like to listen for a minute, the LNP and I are very supportive of the issues that are contained in this bill. What I will not support is the retrospectivity that has an effect on existing mines or existing approvals for mines. In particular, we need to look no further than the effect that this legislation may have on the New Acland mine and the Adani project. In his contribution tonight, Minister Lynham said that people with advanced approvals should not be worried.

Mr Costigan: Try telling them that!

Mr HART: I will take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday because these people are worried—worried to the point where last week 700 people from the New Acland mine protested outside parliament. They are worried. If the minister thinks for a second that these people should not be worried, why then did the minister not go outside and address those members? Why did the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection not address those members and put to rest their worry and their angst?

Dr Rowan: Because they don't care about the workers!

Mr HART: I take that interjection. They do not care about workers. They only care about the workers in the Public Service and their own jobs. That is all they care about.

A lot of the people who were protesting are members of the CFMEU. In his contribution, the member for Ipswich West said that he and the committee were very worried about the future of the New Acland mine. In fact, I think he said that there was an urgent need for construction to commence in early 2017. For the information of the member for Ipswich West, early 2017 is in a few weeks. I am not sure if any of the members opposite can read a calendar, so I repeat: early 2017 is in a few weeks.

The problem is that, when you move the goalposts on those people, they will not be sure if they can move forward on this. They are not going to be able to meet that timetable. What is going to happen then? The member for Ipswich West can worry all he wants, but the people at the New Acland mine are a lot more worried than he is. The Adani mine will bring a windfall to the state and the government, if it goes ahead. Every time this government does something, it introduces more and more sovereign risk to the state. For the lemmings on the backbench, that is exactly what—

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We have already had a ruling that the use of animals in parliamentary speeches when applied to people is unparliamentary.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): I was talking to the Leader of the House at the time. I did not hear it. Member for Burleigh?

Mr HART: Mr Deputy Speaker, I said that the lemmings down the back of the chamber are following this government off the edge of a cliff. We all know what lemmings are. It is the computer game where you follow one of the little soldiers and they keep marching up a set of stairs and eventually they go over a cliff. It is a computer game. That is where this government is taking us. Again, I fully support the amendments that the honourable member for Hinchinbrook will move during the conclusion of this particular debate. They are very sensible. I feel that, if we can get those particular things up, the rest of the bill is okay.