




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 1 November 2016

MOTION

**Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation
Amendment Bill**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (6.10 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Nanango that the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill take precedence over all other government business. The damage that the delays and endless appeals have caused to both the Adani Carmichael project and the New Hope Acland stage 3 project cannot be overstated. We have seen objection after objection against Adani ranging from large, well-funded conservation groups to smaller green groups and even lone objectors with almost no connection to the area. These objections have cost Adani in the vicinity of \$1 million over the six years this process has been dragging on. The process New Hope has had to endure is nothing short of a national embarrassment. The Acland stage 3 proposal has just been the subject of the longest Land Court hearing in history. When New Hope received the Coordinator-General's report and approval in December 2014, followed in August 2015 by the approval of an environmental authority, they would have thought that what had already been a long and drawn-out process was all but over. How wrong they were!

When Minister Lynham expanded the objection criteria from those directly affected to absolutely anyone who had the time to object, New Hope found themselves in the Land Court. This Land Court hearing began in October 2015 and continued until October 2016. The findings of this hearing have still not been handed down. The government were clearly still not satisfied and thought it had not been an onerous enough process, so they then introduced the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This will mean that yet another underground water impact study will need to be completed despite the fact that this was done during the EIS process and an entire two weeks were devoted exclusively to underground impacts and make-good conditions during the Land Court process. This process is expected to take between 12 and 18 months.

The next stage of Acland will mean an extra 260 jobs in the local community, taking that workforce to 435. There are 507 contractor jobs that are reliant upon Acland and an estimated 2,300 indirect jobs that are now all at risk. New Hope have approximately six to 10 months of coal left in their current tenure. They will run out of coal. This ticking time bomb has caused a great deal of distress amongst the workforce as they watch this government throw hurdle after hurdle in front of the approval process. The workers of Acland have watched in amazement—and now in anger—as the government panders to the Greens and leaves the workforce hung out to dry. The vast majority of the workforce at Acland are locals; there are no fly-in fly-out workers. The town of Oakey is very reliant on the workers at New Hope for its survival. Many of them live in the town of Oakey or the surrounding community. Most of the contractors that service the mine are locally owned family businesses. These businesses and workers now have no idea what the future holds for them and are living with the uncertainty this government has created.

This morning we saw the level of concern that these workers are experiencing when approximately 700 of them protested outside Parliament House. Did any members of the government go out to speak to them to alleviate their concerns? No, they did not. The town of Oakey is going through some tough times. The residents of the town are dealing with a water contamination issue that is affecting the housing market and local businesses. Added to this is the stress and the associated health concerns that come from not having their questions adequately answered. This government has given these residents no support or certainty on either of the issues that are threatening their very livelihoods.

This bill needs to be brought before the House and debated at the earliest opportunity to provide the people of Oakey and the communities that rely on the Acland mine with some certainty and some peace of mind. One only need cast their mind back to the way this government treated Stradbroke Island and the fallout that happened there to know why the community is so concerned. Coming from a landholder background I know the importance of underground water. It has been investigated. It is time for those findings to be presented and this issue to be debated and put to bed. Give the people of Oakey some certainty!