




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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WATER LEGISLATION (DAM SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.57 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate of the Water Legislation (Dam Safety) Amendment Bill 2016, which was introduced into the House by the Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply, Hon. Mark Bailey. Every one of those portfolios is very important to agriculture, as is this bill.

Earlier the member for Whitsunday mentioned the tragedy at Blackwater, which was probably the catalyst for this issue being addressed. No greater tragedy can we imagine. We also saw the devastation that happened in Callide Creek and with the release of water from Wivenhoe Dam in 2015. As the member for Mirani has just highlighted, in heavy rainfall events water does need to be released from storages. It is unavoidable. When water was released from Wivenhoe Dam we saw damage around Colleges Crossing and areas like it.

Referable dams are dams from which the release of water poses a risk to two or more people. Those people would need to be notified and an emergency action plan implemented. I note from the minister's foreshadowed amendments that it relates not just to people impacted but also to infrastructure such as roads because it affects schools, emergency services and so on. The main part of this legislation that interests me is farm dams because on the central downs there is probably a higher concentration of farm dams—

Debate, on motion of Mr Weir, adjourned.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (6.38 pm), continuing: As I was saying, my concern with this legislation relates to farm dams. Condamine probably has the heaviest density of ring tanks or irrigation dams in the state. Most of those dams would range in size from 400 megalitres to 700 or 800 megalitres, so a large number of them will be trapped by the legislation as referable dams. They have five-metre-high earth walls. Occasionally those dams leak, which is how I would describe it, rather than burst. Generally those leaks are quickly repaired. I have never heard of one of those dams losing all of its water. In most cases, the leak is repaired before one-third of the water is lost from storage. There has never been an injury or death from a leak from any of those dams.

Cotton Australia and QFF have said that this bill will provide an improvement on the regulation that was previously in place, but both believe that the legislation that was in place was unnecessary— as is this—because the dams pose no threat to either the public or property. Trapping the dams as referable dams will mean a lot of expense. It is estimated that it will cost up to \$20,000 for farmers to get expert advice and have management plans drawn up. They will need to implement any of the

recommendations that come from that advice. They will have no option but to erect signage, which is a pain in the neck on a large-scale agricultural dam. As I have said, in my area numerous dams have been there for 30 to 40 years and are an integral part of the landscape. This bill is an overreach and, in my opinion, this is a completely unnecessary part of the legislation. I understand the need with large structures, which the death of the young girl in Blackwater proves.

Mr Rickuss: If you don't understand it, regulate it.

Mr WEIR: That is right, member for Lockyer. I would like to hear the minister address my concerns when he sums up the bill.