




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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WATER (LOCAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (4.26 pm): The Water (Local Management Arrangements) Amendment Bill 2016 establishes a declared project for the transfer of the businesses, assets and liabilities of SunWater in relation to a declared channel scheme to an irrigation entity. The bill establishes a transfer scheme to transfer and deal with licences, registrations, authorities, approvals and instruments and the transfer of SunWater employees to the irrigation entity, as well as provides exemption from state taxes, fees and charges associated with the transfer scheme.

Across all the schemes, out of a total of more than 3,000 customers, only 40 were in opposition to local management. The concern in regard to this is although it has the support of irrigators, there is a cost in relation to maintenance of the channel schemes. If our water assets are sold off and are in the hands of multinational corporations we will see not only the high cost of water but also the high cost of maintenance of the schemes. Members might say, 'You're a bit delusional, Shane.' That is what we said about Queensland Rail. There was also a big push to sell off our energy assets.

The Mareeba-Dimbulah channel scheme is in my electorate. Back in the 1950s we saw the construction of the Tinaroo Dam and its channel scheme which had eight weirs. It grew tobacco, corn, fruit, vegies and livestock and has become one of the food bowls of the north. I do not have the Burdekin-Haughton channel scheme in my electorate, but I do have the Burdekin Dam. There is no greater sight than to see the Burdekin River in full flight, particularly when it is flooding from bank to bank.

The need for water infrastructure projects has been raised. We have not seen any water infrastructure for the last 30 years. I believe there is a small dam around the Bundaberg area, Paradise Dam. Before every election we hear talk about the need for water infrastructure, but we are not seeing it. It is important, in relation to the Hell's Gate Dam proposal and the Big Rocks Weir project in my electorate, to look at the history of the Burdekin Dam. The Burdekin Dam was as a result of a big push from the Charters Towers Regional Council, the Dalrymple shire council, the Burdekin water board, the Burdekin Shire Council and a bloke by the name of Frank Rossiter.

At that time, a lot of pressure was put on the Bjelke-Petersen government to commence the construction of the dam and the development of the Burdekin-Haughton irrigation scheme. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen flew over the site. He met with the water board, the mayors and the councillors. Sir Joh came back and said, 'I will build the dam'. However, he said the scale of the operation was too much for the state government to fund, so he went to the feds. At that time, the feds were going through a leadership challenge that saw Bob Hawke overthrow Bill Hayden. Bob Hawke flew up to Townsville and spoke to both the Townsville City Council and the Thuringowa City Council. They said, 'What are you going to do about the dam?' Bob Hawke knew that if he did not support part funding that project he was wasting his time supporting the Labor candidate, Ted Lindsay. Bob Hawke went back and said he would back the dam at 60 per cent, leaving Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen to provide 40 per cent, in a combined federal and state government effort to fund that dam.

At the present moment, we have to look at the Burdekin irrigation scheme and, as the member for Townsville said, the jobs, the wealth, the taxes and the royalties that will go back to the state. Projects such as the Hell's Gate Dam to gravity feed water to Townsville, which is on water restrictions, and others to provide water security to the Charters Towers region are so important. Last year, the Burdekin irrigators were on water restrictions. We now have an opportunity to construct the dam and I do not mean just talking about it, but actually doing it and making something tangible. I support the bill and commend it to the House.