




Speech By  
**Hon. Glenn Butcher**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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### **RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (3.40 pm): This afternoon I rise in support of the Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. This is, as other members have said, an omnibus bill and I will be using my short time today to speak to the water side of it. The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting local councils and water service providers right across Queensland to address urban water security and to improve their water supply and sewerage systems.

As the Premier has said previously, it is a priority for the Palaszczuk government to ensure urban water security for all of Queensland, and there are many examples where our government is doing just this. Last month I officially opened round 6 of our hugely successful Building our Regions program which will deliver over \$70 million of funding for regional councils to improve water treatment and wastewater treatment services in Queensland. Our investment in supporting urban water supply also includes new infrastructure planning such as Townsville's Houghton Pipeline. Stage 2 of the pipeline will connect with stage 1 and enable Townsville City Council to access supplies from the Burdekin River, providing a safer and more efficient transfer of water.

**Mr Harper:** And it's great that the state backed it.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I take that interjection. The planning for the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline will ensure a shovel-ready project is ready—

**Mrs Frecklington:** How's that going?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I take that interjection; it is going great. As I was saying, that planning is going great to secure drinking water supplies for over 20,000 residents in the region. When the town of Stanthorpe was affected by drought, this government stepped in to provide over \$11.6 million for the carting of water using a panel of local transport contractors.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr BUTCHER:** We have a further \$8.1 million invested in the early works—and this is for the benefit of the member for Nanango—for the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline. We have \$8.1 million invested in that project. Surveyors are already on the ground in that region establishing potential routes for the new pipeline.

While investment in infrastructure is incredibly important, it is also important to have the right legislative framework in place to protect those water resources. The amendments in this bill seek to ensure the appropriate governance frameworks are in place to do just that. Currently in South-East Queensland, the distributor-retailers, Urban Utilities and Unitywater, cannot undertake certain investigations or enforcement actions against people suspected of not complying with mandatory water restrictions during times of drought. It is important that they are able to undertake these tasks just like councils do because, combined, Urban Utilities and Unitywater service nearly two million people and

approximately 62 per cent of the South-East Queensland region. While the overwhelming majority of Queenslanders act responsibly during times of drought, it is really important that the laws which relate to enforcement and compliance with water restrictions apply equally to everyone.

The amendments to the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009 give the distributor-retailers investigation and enforcement powers equivalent to those available to local water service providers in South-East Queensland. It will not matter if a person resides within the Urban Utilities geographic area or within Logan council; the rules will be the same across the board. The amendments also enable Urban Utilities and Unitywater to appoint authorised persons who will have the same powers of entry as those local government officers to gather evidence in circumstances of potential noncompliance. The appointed persons would also be authorised to implement necessary enforcement or compliance actions such as issuing penalty infringement notices. The amendments will help to ensure our precious water resources are managed appropriately for the benefit of the entire community.

Another important step for ensuring Queensland's water security is helping to protect the state's water service providers against potential malicious cybersecurity attacks. The amendments to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 provide that highly sensitive cybersecurity information is not made publicly available where cybercriminals can access it and then target Queensland water service providers. Recently we have seen these types of things happening and shutting down major services in Queensland. We certainly do not want that to happen, and that is why we have added this amendment to the water supply act. I commend the bill to the House.