




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2022

**BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.42 pm): I rise to address the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I was trying to think of a word I could use around the aspect that I want to focus on that fits within our parliamentary standards of language. I am going to go with ‘unglamorous’ because I want to focus on those changes to the expanded use of greywater. The explanatory notes state—

Factors such as population growth, which increases demand on existing water supplies; climate change; recognition of the need for more sustainable buildings; and increased demand for green star commercial developments, require more responsible and innovative ways to use resources such as water.

It surprises me that we still need amendments to Queensland legislation to look at using treated greywater in things like cooling towers and flushing toilets, but it is great that we are now getting around to doing that. The explanatory notes also state—

The amendments are intended to facilitate the proposed uses of treated greywater while ensuring public health outcomes are maintained through appropriate regulatory oversight.

It might seem crazy that this is what I want to focus on, given the amount of rain we have received in the last couple of months, particularly in my part of the world around the electorate of Glass House. At the moment, if we get five millimetres, it results in flash flooding in some places because the catchment is so waterlogged. I take the opportunity at this stage to apologise to my northern colleague, the member for Gympie, for what we send down the Mary River every time it rains. I also apologise to my southern colleagues along the Brisbane River for what we send down the Stanley and into Somerset Dam and the Brisbane River.

The reason we are talking about greywater and looking at the amendments today is that with our population growth we need to look at how we use our water carefully and we need to consider future water sources. I will not be specific around what that needs to look at, but we cannot wait for the next drought to respond to that. We need to do a lot more planning because of the huge population growth in South-East Queensland and indeed across Queensland, particularly as a result of COVID over the last couple of years. We need to make sure we have facilities to provide clean, treated water to our growing population.

We also need to look at how we use our wastewater. If I focus on the population growth in the northern Moreton Bay region and the southern Sunshine Coast region, people are rightly asking me where the water is coming from and what we will be doing with our wastewater. These amendments around better use of greywater are certainly welcomed.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge some good work that Unitywater have been doing across my electorate. One of the huge developments that is coming in the southern part of Glass House is the Caboolture West development. Whilst people are very ready to question whether we have the infrastructure in terms of roads and public transport, one of the things they often do not think about is whether we have the water and what we will do with the waste. The great thing that Unitywater have

done is look at a way they can prepare for the future that does not involve putting more treated water into the Caboolture River or Deception Bay and the broader Moreton Bay. They are looking at supporting our ongoing agricultural production to the north of the D'Aguilar Highway by instigating the Wamuran Irrigation Scheme.

Stage 1 of that scheme alone is looking to put 2.6 gigalitres of water a year—that is over 1,000 Olympic swimming pools—into agricultural production. That will help my raspberry growers, strawberry growers, pineapple growers, avocado growers and turf farmers across the southern part of the Glass House electorate. That is only stage 1. If that proves successful and if the water continues to be able to be provided at a consistent rate and at a reasonable price, there are up to four stages that potentially could see water stretch right across to the north of Elimbah to some of our nurseries in that part of the world. That is a fantastic use of treated water on a much larger scale than what is being proposed in this legislation, but every little bit helps mitigate our requirement for new water sources.

I also want to mention the work that Unitywater have done in the northern part of the electorate around the Maleny Sewage Treatment Plant. One of the things we started during our term in government when I was the minister for the environment was to look at new and innovative ways to not just invest in hard infrastructure around sewage treatment plants but to look at soft infrastructure—that is, using the natural environment to provide filters for treated water to take it to that next level. One of the first projects was on what we call the Maleny precinct, where Unitywater revegetated a large area of that precinct, including a number of wetlands, and used the revegetation and the wetlands to filter treated water to a higher degree as it heads down Obi Creek. I would love to see that taken one step further.

Since that project has occurred, the Maleny golf course has been developed. I acknowledge the Minister for Sport in the House at the moment. That golf club was recently awarded \$150,000 for a new irrigation project. Again, that seems crazy at the moment when we cannot get on the golf course because of flooding. This will literally droughtproof the course for the future. As negotiations continue with Unitywater, it would be great to tap into that pipeline as it heads up to those wetlands on the north of the precinct and take it to the golf club. The new irrigation scheme that has been funded through that grant could be used to provide a constant source of water to the golf club at a reasonable price—or ideally it could be free. It would be great if that opportunity was provided to Maleny and the surrounds. I do have to declare that I am both a patron and a member of the Maleny Golf Club.

Those amendments around greywater will continue to expand on our better reuse of this precious resource that is water. I also want to acknowledge that there are changes to the way we deal with holding tanks for sewage and greywater. These are very important amendments given the electorate I represent, where not a lot of the electorate is tapped into the main sewerage system. At present—

If premises are located in an area served by a sewerage system, sewage from the premises must be discharged into the sewerage system. This requirement can be costly and impractical for temporary premises, such as toilets on a construction site.

Where premises are not in an area served by a sewerage system, sewage and greywater from the premises must be discharged into a facility that treats the matter before it can be held in a holding tank for collection and disposal off-site.

As was mentioned by others, this is a huge problem where there is insufficient space on a property to accommodate any sort of treatment facility. These amendments are going to 'enable an owner of a premises, under a permit issued by the local government, to discharge untreated waste and water from a toilet or soil fixture (sewage), or greywater, or both types of waste directly into a holding tank for collection and disposal off-site'. This is a great outcome for a lot of the construction sites around the electorate of Glass House. We will now be able to put that untreated water into a holding tank and take it off-site to be treated. It will be a far more economical outcome and a far more commercially minded outcome, particularly for our builders as they operate around the site.

It is probably surprising that this kind of amendment is required in the 21st century, but then again some of these things fall through the cracks and you do not realise until they get tested or challenged and local governments bring them to our attention. I commend this amendment, as it seems to be bringing in a far more sensible outcome for our business operators around the state, particularly in the south-east and particularly in the electorate of Glass House.

With those few comments, I reiterate the comments made on this side of the House that the LNP will not be opposing this legislation. While there are a lot of technical aspects, some of which others have mentioned around 'ban the banners' that potentially could have been brought forward, it is good to see these amendments, and I do believe, as I said, they will produce a better outcome for the state of Queensland.