




Speech By
Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2023

WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (12.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Improving water measurement will strengthen transparency and community confidence in how Queensland's rural water resources are managed. Water users and the community want their water resources managed effectively. They expect the government to have appropriate systems and processes in place to ensure all water users can access their fair share and that our water resources are sustainably managed. Consultation has indicated broad community support for improved measurement.

In a past life, many years ago, I was involved in water resource management in the South-West Queensland and the Murray-Darling Basin catchments. I could see back then that one of the key pillars of proper water management is the accurate and efficient management of the take where possible. Otherwise the suspicions primary producers might have of the users upstream and how much water they are taking can be never ending. When we are talking about volumetric entitlements, accurate measurement can go a long way to creating somewhat more harmonious relationships locally. If people cannot be sure how much water their neighbours are taking from a watercourse and if it is not properly managed, sadly sometimes a rule of thumb used is that the bloke upstream takes more than he should and the bloke downstream is a bit of a whinger. I certainly saw a wide variety of relationships between neighbouring producers during my time in South-West Queensland which, of course, almost always concerned water.

Accurately measuring water take will benefit communities, industry and the environment. It will provide transparency and an assurance that water is being appropriately shared and managed. It will provide water entitlement holders with reliable evidence that they are meeting their regulatory obligations. It will support the operation of water markets and trading so water can be used where it is needed most.

Implementation of strengthened measurement will occur progressively through staged amendments. The regulations will provide the detailed requirements, including for installing, maintaining, validating and reading meters. First stage amendments will focus on measurement devices such as meters and telemetry. Second stage amendments will focus on requirements for measurement plans which are important for overland flow measurement.

I note the committee's comments regarding the recommendations they have made and the government's response to those. They are broadly supporting the bill. That is good to see. Of course this all comes down to the cost and the rollout of measuring devices and telemetry. I can see where the deputy chair, the member for Lockyer is coming from, with regard to their comments. I extend my sincere sympathies to the member for Lockyer and his family as well.

These amendments are part of a suite of initiatives being introduced to improve water management in the regional development, manufacturing and water portfolio. I know the topic of stock and domestic water use is something raised in submissions to the inquiry. Under the policy which sits

under the legislation, the statewide minimum threshold of five megalitres has been established, below which a meter will not be required. Entitlements to take water for the following low-risk activities will not need to be metered: stock and domestic; public amenities; and educational facilities. It is clear in the policy that metering will not be required for 'entitlements to take water for following low-risk activities: stock and domestic, public amenities and educational facilities'. I am not sure where the member for Nanango's amendment is coming from if this is already covered in the policy and addressed in the bill.

The bill also includes amendments to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 and the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009. Whilst these amendments are generally minor, technical or operational in nature, they clarify existing provisions and requirements and improve the operational efficiency of these acts.