




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2023

WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (12.05 pm): I rise to support the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The bill delivers a key government commitment by strengthening water measurement in Queensland. Improving water measurement will strengthen transparency and community confidence in how Queensland's rural water resources are managed. Balancing the need for strengthened measurement against managing impacts on water users has been a key consideration in developing measurement policy and framework. I congratulate the minister on doing such a good job. He is very concerned about water in regional Queensland for growers and for industry. I highlight that the minister is very mindful of making sure there is enough water for industry in my electorate. We know that balancing the need for strengthened measurement against impacts on water users has been a key consideration. Water users in the community want their water resources managed effectively.

We have heard from the member for Mirani. I was waiting for the earth to fall in. I was waiting for a hole to open up in this place into which we would all fall. When I was a young man growing up in Longreach, my father was on the Longreach Regional Council. They talked about bringing in water meters and making sure that we had enough water in the community for future use. There were town hall meetings. While the member for Mirani was speaking I sat here and closed my eyes and I thought I was back in the Longreach town hall because he was saying exactly what I heard when I was a young man and my father was on the Longreach council.

Now in regional areas they are talking about how water meters and the proper use of water have saved the Longreach community following the influx of tourists. I was talking to the mayor, Tony Rayner. He is a great mayor and a school friend of mine. He was talking about how great it has been to work with the minister and his office on raising the weirs on the Thomson River. He spoke about how supportive—I say that again, how supportive—the minister has been in working with the Longreach Regional Council to make sure that their water supply is adequate for the future and that they preserve water. As an old Longreach boy, I thank the minister personally because I know how important water is for regional communities such as Longreach.

I just heard the member for Gregory speak. I thank the member for Gregory for saying what a great mayor Tony Rayner is. He is a really good bloke. I also acknowledge the nice words he said about the minister making sure that there is water available for the Longreach community for years to come.

Water users in the community want their water 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. I talked about sitting in the Longreach town hall many years ago and hearing people say exactly what the member for Mirani was saying about how there would be no food, no yellow belly in the Thomson River and things like that. However, it has all been managed very well.

Consultation has indicated community support for improved measurement and I cannot see why not. Accurately measuring water take will benefit communities, industry and the environment. It will provide transparency and assurance that water is being appropriately shared and managed. It is very important that we make sure that it is managed because we know that water has to be managed for regional and rural communities to survive. Water is the backbone of a lot of employment and industries in regional communities.

Implementation of strengthened measurement will occur progressively through staged regulation amendments. It is not coming in straightaway. We are staging it. We are thinking about the user. We are thinking about the farmers. We are thinking about the industry people. We are thinking about the whole community. First-stage regulation amendments will focus on measurement devices such as meters. Second-stage amendments will focus on requirements for measurement plans which are important to overland flow measurements. This is pretty basic common sense and very good policy from the water minister. These amendments are part of a suite of initiatives being introduced to improve water management in the regional development, manufacturing and water portfolios. Other improvements being progressively introduced include refinements to water business functions, operations and data systems. These are being introduced to improve sustainable water resource management across the state.

Yesterday we heard the member for Burleigh speak about water meter manufacturing. Fancy them talking about manufacturing! That is all I will say. We know how good the LNP were with manufacturing and we know what happened with the trains. If I start talking about trains I will be louder than the CFMEU out the front.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance—again—to the legislation that is before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Member for Maryborough, I would ask you to confine your contribution to the long title of the bill.

Mr SAUNDERS: In terms of relevance, you need water to make trains. It is part of the train-manufacturing process. We need water for the 800 workers in a factory who are manufacturing trains in my electorate. Water is very important. That is why we have to meter it. We have to make sure we are getting the right flows. We do not want too much water going to the train factory; we could have problems. We do not want to waste water, either. We have to make sure there is a balance. This legislation gives us the balance in terms of the train factory. I thank the member for Nanango for her interjection because she knows that I love talking about trains. If she likes, I will keep talking about water and trains.

We are talking about water meters. We could manufacture water meters in Queensland. We have a great water and manufacturing minister who will be working on this, to ensure these meters are manufactured in Queensland. He will talk to industry. I know that last night the minister was talking to a lot of manufacturers in our community. I know that the minister has already been up to my electorate quite a few times and has been talking to the Fraser Coast Regional Council. He has discussed water with the Fraser Coast Regional Council.

The Fraser Coast Regional Council is one of the councils to roll out smart meters. I know that the last time the minister was in town, he and the mayor had a conversation. His department has also been working with Wide Bay Water about future water use for the Fraser Coast and about a water grid et cetera. I know that he cares about regional Queensland. I know that he cares about water for our state. He is supporting councils and our manufacturers. A good government gets out and talks about regional Queensland and makes sure there is water.

Mr Harper: The Houghton pipeline in Townsville.

Mr SAUNDERS: I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa. He was talking about the pipeline.

Mr Harper: The Houghton pipeline.

Mr SAUNDERS: I know that the Houghton pipeline is absolutely crucial to the people of Townsville.

Mr Harper: \$400 million.

Mr SAUNDERS: There is \$400 million in investment from the Palaszczuk Labor government, investment from the water—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maryborough, you have had a really good crack. The bill is concerned with the metering of non-urban supplies. The House will thank you for confining yourself to the long title of the bill.

Mr SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I know there is an opportunity here for water across the state. I would like to personally congratulate the minister, because I know he has been talking not only to my council but also to stakeholders right around Queensland. As I travel around regional Queensland, they tell me that they talk to the minister about water usage and the future of water for our state. I commend the bill to the House.