




Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**

**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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### **WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.41 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill. I will address a couple of the issues the member for Lockyer raised. Clearly cost is always a big issue, and during the inquiry submitters were very clear in expressing their desire to see costs reduced. I would point out that there is \$22 million in federal funding available to put in telemetry, and that is important. Obviously it is expensive to do this, but it is clear there is a good amount of money on the table. In addition, I want to read out a comment from the committee report relating to that cost. It states—

We also note that several policy initiatives have been adopted to reduce the costs for water users such as applying exemptions to small-volume water users; allowing existing meters to continue to be used if they are appropriate; using non-pattern approved meters if there is a lack of pattern-approved meters available; and applying these requirements in accordance with the department's risk-based approach.

The report further states—

While we note the efforts made to reduce costs for water users, we have recommended that the department continue to monitor ...

I think they are important initiatives to keep in mind when we talk about this bill and how we will smooth out the path of costs.

In relation to the issue of measuring overland flow, the committee did ask a number of times where this applies. It was very clear that the bill before us is for the Murray-Darling Basin. This is probably a very important thing. The member for Lockyer mentioned whether it applies to the state, but that would be a different kettle of fish. This bill relates to the Murray-Darling Basin, and that is because we have signed national commitments that need to be enacted by 2025 in relation to measuring the water take or measuring the water in this particular basin.

In many ways this bill is about the measurement of water. The committee found there is generally an acceptance that it has to be measured. Everyone agrees that water needs to be better managed and there is a growing acceptance of the role of telemetry. Telemetry is the key to measuring water take. One of the old ways to measure water was via meter. Someone would have to make a trip out to the meter, physically read it and report back. Telemetry can send out a signal. It does not have to be constant, but whenever a Landsat passes over it can send out a signal. It does not have to be in constant wi-fi communication. Telemetry has been increasingly accepted as the best way to measure water in this particular area, and we have to adopt all of those measures to make sure it is widely accepted.

There are a couple of other things I want to say. The committee congratulated the Water Engagement Forum, which is a great body that has worked for many years on this particular issue. We want to congratulate them on their work. We also want to congratulate both state and federal governments for funding telemetry measurement. The committee could very clearly see that the aim of this bill is to build a clear and transparent regulatory framework, and that is what we need to do. Whether it is surface or underground water, we need to measure how much water is being taken. Everyone agrees on the need to manage this resource and make sure we accurately measure water.

We have all agreed that what we pointed out in this bill is the best way to go. It is where we want to go because, as we have often heard before, you cannot manage what you cannot measure. This bill provides a good start on measuring this very precious resource and how it is used. It is timely that we bring this bill in. It is very clear that the state government has committed to be part of the national measures, to which we have all committed, to accurately measure the water taken out of the Murray-Darling Basin. I commend the bill to the House.