



Speech By
Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2023

WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (4.10 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker Lui, I seek the indulgence of both you and the House for a moment in relation to a relatively urgent matter that I have only just become aware of. It relates to the debate of committee report No. 26 of this parliament where in my contribution I referenced the nuclear energy policy in Queensland. I have subsequently become aware of material, including a media report, that I was unaware of at the time of my contribution. I want to now make it clear that I was referencing Queensland LNP federal members—something that I mentioned during my contribution to that debate but want to reiterate now to avoid any misinterpretation and to remove any possible doubt. Thank you.

Turning to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, a thorough and modern water measurement policy to improve the way that water is measured and reported in Queensland is absolutely essential in ensuring that our precious water resources are well managed not only now but into the future. The amendments in this bill focus mainly on three key areas around amendments to the Water Act in relation to water measurement policy. There are also some amendments to the Water Act around streamlining administration and amendments to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act and the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act.

Access to water is a key economic driver that delivers growth and delivers jobs, particularly for our regional communities. Knowing how much water is taken is essential for sustainable water resource management and ensures that water users receive their fair share and in accordance with their entitlements. We need to have appropriate systems and processes in place to ensure that water users can access their water resources and that they can manage the use of their water resources in a sustainable way for the benefit of Queensland and them as users. Accurately measuring water take will benefit communities, industry and the environment through transparency and increase the assurance that water is being appropriately shared and managed. It will provide entitlement holders with reliable evidence to assist in meeting any regulatory obligations. These are all part of the amendments which are being introduced as part of this bill which will deliver improved sustainable water resource management right across Queensland.

I will turn to the section of the bill that relates to dam safety. The bill contains amendments to ensure emergency action plans for our 114 referable dams are reviewed and approved well ahead of the start of each wet season. The changes define the required date a review must be completed by and expands and allows for this date to be prescribed by a regulator via a notice. This supports better preparedness ahead of the wet season to allow for a rapid response to unforeseen circumstances such as extreme weather events by dam owners and operators and by governments. On behalf of a community that was absolutely devastated by the 2022 floods, we know all too well that you cannot be too prepared for extreme weather events. You cannot be too prepared for the impacts of these extreme weather events. I want to pay tribute to the resilience and strength of the Bundamba community, particularly the residents and flood victims in suburbs such as Goodna and Bundamba for the strength

and resilience that they have shown since the devastation that was wrought on our local community at the beginning of last year. We have come a long way and a lot of that has happened under the Resilient Homes Fund, but it will stay with so many for a lifetime but we walk forward together.

In preparation for last summer's forecast La Nina, Wivenhoe Dam's temporary full supply level was lowered temporarily to 80 per cent and in doing so the Palaszczuk Labor government reduced water bills for all South-East Queensland households connected to the SEQ water grid by \$55. That is a key help when it comes to providing cost-of-living relief for water users in South-East Queensland. That assistance equated to the use of 13,200 litres of free water for approximately 1.38 million homes. Queenslanders can rely on Labor governments and can rely on the Palaszczuk Labor government to deliver secure and sustainable water supplies right throughout Queensland, because it was Labor that delivered the South East Queensland Water Grid in response to the millennium drought. We delivered climate resilient infrastructure like the Gold Coast Desalination Plant and the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme. These are vital assets that have provided and will continue to provide water security in South-East Queensland.

Importantly, we have kept these assets in public hands. We also have billions in new water infrastructure projects underway like the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline, the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline and the Paradise Dam rebuild. With regard to the Paradise Dam rebuild, I want to pay tribute to the advocacy of the member for Bundaberg, who is doing an absolutely brilliant job on behalf of his community. That is a project that is being delivered in partnership between two Labor governments. That is in stark contrast to those opposite. When last in government, the only thing that those opposite did when it came to water infrastructure was to can a dam—the Connors River Dam—and prepare publicly owned dams for sale. In opposition the LNP at the last election tried to pull a bit of a swiftie—a water infrastructure hoax—on Queenslanders through its notorious fake Bradfield scheme—a \$15 billion unfunded hoax that was ultimately rejected by the people of Queensland. Indeed, an expert panel that was led by Professor Ross Garnaut conducted a year-long study into the Bradfield scheme and last year made its final report, which concluded that the scheme was not feasible. The expert panel included former Farmers' Federation CEO Dr Georgina Davis and James Cook University's Professor Allan Dale. This independent panel found that the scheme's costs far exceeded its benefits, so it recommended exploring better options for using water to contribute to regional development.

It was a thorough investigation that provided conclusive and sound explanations of why there are better options than the fake Bradfield scheme. There we have it. The LNP's signature water policy had a couple of problems: it had no money, it did not work and hardly anybody voted for it. The Palaszczuk Labor government will keep on delivering water security throughout Queensland. The measures that are contained in this bill, like improved water measurement, will deliver reliable and sustainable water right across Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.