




Speech By  
**Michael Hart**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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**WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (6.43 pm): I too rise to contribute to the debate on the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We need to consider that we are now in the eighth month of 2023 and reflect on the fact that this bill was put to the House on 12 October 2022 and reported on, by the committee that I sit on, on 9 December 2022.

It always worries me when we see a government trying to change things to make them more accurate. In this case, they are talking about installing water meters in places that did not have water meters or where they want to install more accurate water meters. With that thought in mind, my devious mind immediately jumped to thinking that maybe this is some sort of revenue raiser for the government. At the department briefing I asked whether any modelling had been done to see whether the revenue stream from water may change under these changes. The department representative said—

I might ask for clarification about 'the revenue stream'.

She did not quite get that. I then said—

I am trying to figure out whether this is about revenue or water take or environmental issues. Has there been any consideration that this may bring more money into the government from being able to measure the take versus what we are doing now?

The response was—

There is no current proposal to increase the revenue of the government that is a part of this. The bill is certainly about improving measurement to ensure we have transparent access to information and we are responsible manager of water.

This legislation provides a head of power under the regulation for the minister to make changes. When the department talks about there being no 'current' proposal to increase revenue that indicates to me that this regulation, which none of us have seen by the way, could make those changes.

The minister talks about the regulation. I will refer to the government's response to the committee report on the bill. It states—

The government notes and supports this comment from the committee. The department has developed a more detailed information paper about the proposed Water Regulation amendments and provided this to the Water Engagement Forum ...

Apparently, it has been recently provided to the Water Engagement Forum. As I have said, this bill was reported on in December of last year and the regulation has been given to the Water Engagement Forum but it is not available to members of parliament to peruse to see exactly what it is that we are signing up to. Unfortunately, I do not trust this government to make these sorts of changes.

Another major concern that I have relates to fitting the water meters and associated pumps. I guess they are going to have a water meter and a pump. That work has to be carried out by a duly approved person. In the past we have seen this government change regulation and legislation to make it a 'duly approved person' who signs off on the installation of whatever it maybe that the legislation is talking about. What tends to happen is that we end up with a training company training this 'duly approved person' and, for some strange reason, most of those training companies are associated with unions. It is, in fact, a revenue stream for the unions—

**Mr Lister:** And the Labor Party.

**Mr HART:**—and, hence, the Labor Party every time this government changes something that requires a ‘duly approved person’ to do an installation. Having a duly approved person install these things leads to a whole lot of other problems, as was articulated by the member for Nanango.

In a lot of regional areas these pumps, and hence the meters, are actually installed by the supplier who may not be a registered plumber, a registered electrician or a duly approved person. Suddenly they will have to be this duly approved person. We did ask the department how many of these duly approved people there are, because we do not know who a duly approved person is. They were not able to tell us. That leads us to the problem of how many there are, where they are, how hard they are to get and how much it will cost to get this duly approved person to install the water meter.

We are not reinventing the wheel here; this is something that has happened in other states. We are talking about the Murray-Darling Basin, so Victoria and New South Wales have some input in terms of what they have done in their states. You would think the government would want to hear about the sorts of problems that have occurred over the years in New South Wales and Victoria as part of this process, but they have not in fact invited some of the key players who were involved in what happened in New South Wales. This seems very strange to me.

We heard from John Shannon, from the Border Rivers Food and Fibre group, who is not part of the Water Engagement Forum but who had some very interesting things to tell us about his observations.

**Mr Lister:** He represents people who grow about a billion dollars worth of produce.

**Mr HART:** I take that interjection. You would think the government would want to listen to his input, but he is not on the Water Engagement Forum. I encourage the government to put the Border Rivers Food and Fibre group into the Water Engagement Forum and use their expertise. He told us that his initial observation from looking at the information schedule for the policy is that it is ambitious. Here is a guy who has gone through this process in another state looking at the Queensland process and saying it is ambitious. What does ‘ambitious’ mean?

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr HART:** I take the interjections from the Labor members, because they are hardly ambitious at all! This is a bill that was reported on in December last year and here we are in September—eight months later. This bill has finally made it to the top of the *Notice Paper*. Mind you, it has been there before but then has been shuffled backwards. Wouldn’t that indicate to members that this government is not serious about water at all? This is the very first bill that the Minister for Water has been responsible for, yet it has been shuffled backwards. I do not know what he has been doing with his time.

I remind members opposite that, if they are going to start talking about water delivery, it is not good just having pipelines, pumps and so on. They actually need to build a dam. What is this government’s history with regard to building dams? The last dam they built was Paradise Dam. What have they done with that? They have torn it down and will have to spend five times more to build it up again—Labor logic! There are no dams planned for water use in this state apart from the Rookwood Weir, which the government was dragged screaming to. I actually went to Rockhampton in 2017. The LNP promised to build that dam and the Labor Party followed suit soon after. The Labor government has cancelled dams. The government has a Big Build which is actually a big hoax. It talks about building some dams in the Pioneer-Burdekin area. It is just not going to happen. They will never build a dam.