




Speech By  
**Hon. Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2023

**WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (11.54 am): I rise to support the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We know that water security is incredibly important for communities and cities throughout Queensland. It is a valuable commodity that needs to be managed properly, which is what this bill will do. Making sure the community and all water users have confidence in how our rural water resources are used is important, which is why this bill is about improving the measurement of that precious resource. The Palaszczuk government has a proven track record when it comes to investing in and managing water in the regions, and I am proud to give an example of this in the House today. This is a government that is investing more than \$400 million in stages 1 and 2 of the Haughton pipeline. The project recognises Townsville's importance as a growing hub for industry and defence, providing more good regional jobs and attracting more people into our city. Townsville is also a city that prides itself on its livability, and a secure water supply that serves future needs is essential as that city grows.

We stepped up when the former Morrison government stepped away from funding stage 2 of the Haughton pipeline project. The federal member for Herbert and his mates in Canberra would not give Townsville its fair share of funding despite it being an election commitment. It was the Palaszczuk government that took on the responsibility of delivering the project for the people of Townsville after Phil Thompson broke his promise to deliver the \$195 million stage 2 of that project. As I said, this was Phil Thompson's cornerstone election commitment of 2019. When it came time to deliver that funding—that vital funding for stage 2 to secure that pipeline—he squibbed it. He absolutely squibbed it. It was not until the Treasurer fronted him and said that we would fund stage 2 that he then came out and said, 'I promised to keep that \$195 million in Townsville.' That is another porky-pie from Phil Thompson, the member for Herbert, because he has not been able to—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance to the bill that we are debating at the moment.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice, and I will take that in silence thanks. Minister, I will get you to come back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr STEWART:** The Palaszczuk government knows the value of delivering better services when it comes to water for our regions, unlike Phil Thompson. All communities want their water resources managed effectively, and that is why this bill is important. As part of the bill the first stage of regulation amendments is focused on measurement devices like meters and telemetry, with the second phase to concentrate on the requirements for measurement plans. This is important for accountability and will help encourage better and more efficient use of water from our regional water consumers. It will be beneficial for water users in places like the Burdekin, where our farmers continue to support good jobs by producing world-class produce.

This is also probably a good opportunity to say that we are raising the Burdekin Falls Dam as well, unlike Phil Thompson. Farmers know the value of water as it is their lifeblood. What this legislation will do is encourage them and everyone to use water more wisely. Everyone wants water resources managed effectively and expects us as the government to have appropriate systems and processes in place to ensure all water users can access their fair share. I note that consultation has indicated broad community support for improved measurement.

Another part of the bill that I would like to talk to relates to dam safety, which is incredibly important for the 114 referable dams throughout Queensland. The bill includes an amendment to ensure emergency action plans for those referable dams are reviewed and approved well ahead of the start of each wet season. In 2019 our community in Townsville saw the devastating impact of an unpredictable wet weather event during a monster monsoon. The Ross River Dam, which is one of Queensland's referable dams, was at more than 200 per cent capacity. Sadly, that meant parts of Townsville were impacted by devastating floods, including down the street from where I live. Dam releases had to be done during periods of low tide to mitigate the impact of flooding as much as possible.

It is for such reasons that this amendment is important. It will define the required date a review must be completed by and expand that to allow for the date to be prescribed by the regulator via a notice. This will provide for preparedness ahead of a wet season and allow for rapid responses to unforeseen circumstances by dam owners and operators and by government agencies. Sadly, as we know, Queensland is not immune to natural disasters but, regardless of whether it is a dam operator or a local household, the key is to get ready, which is what these amendments will do. We will ensure that we are ready for what nature throws at us. I commend the bill to the House.