




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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**RESOURCES SAFETY AND HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL;
MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (7.10 pm): I rise to make a contribution on these cognate bills. There is a lot of cotton production in my electorate of Southern Downs. The area that is particularly interesting to me in relation to this bill is in the north of my electorate around Millmerran and Cecil Plains. There are producers of cotton there who are very concerned about coexistence with coal seam gas. When I saw this bill introduced and I saw there was going to be an attempt to make a legislatively constructive understanding about agriculture and the extraction of coal seam gas and there was an opportunity for it to be ventilated in public and for everyone to have their say, I thought that was a good thing. I am disappointed that the bill will not deal with those coexistence issues, but I would say that if more work is needed then it is better late than never.

I want to speak for the cotton producers in the north of my electorate. For those here who are not familiar with their operations, cotton producers like the Balmaines around Cecil Plains have laser-level fields. It is a very expensive exercise to level those fields, but it enables them to irrigate by flooding the paddocks. It uses the minimum required amount of water because you do not have to fill holes and go over hills and so forth. It is no small thing to create and maintain those laser-level paddocks, and any subsidence is obviously of concern because it makes null and void the industry and toil that goes into making those laser-level paddocks.

That is quite apart from concerns about disturbance to the water supply. Anybody who relies on groundwater there will always be concerned that the extraction of coal seam gas might impinge upon that productive resource. I would just note that Cotton Australia said in their submission—and I see eye to eye with them on this—that coexistence between them and coal seam gas is a very long bow to draw because if the two industries are to coexist side by side, whose interests are going to give way to whose? It strikes me as being something that is too difficult on the face of it to manage, and I stand for agriculture in my electorate. Agriculture is where the growth is; agriculture is where the jobs are. It has a certain, indefinite future, and that is why I consider the plight of those who have laser-level paddocks and are concerned about the extraction of coal seam gas in the area and the effects it will have on them. I think they have a very good case. There has been no economic analysis, as far as I know, of the impacts of subsidence induced by coal seam gas extraction on producers nearby. I look forward to the future when no doubt there will be some legislative interpretation of coexistence to come before a proper parliamentary process so we can comment on it again.

The other point I would like to raise is in response to the amendments regarding no carbon sequestration into the Great Artesian Basin. That is music to my ears. Contrary to hectic accusations from the other side of the House at times, I have always opposed the idea of putting carbon dioxide into the Great Artesian Basin or anywhere near it. It comes back to the fundamental point that I thought my honourable friend the member for Gregory made so quaintly. That is, to us the Great Artesian Basin is

what the Great Barrier Reef is to people on the coast. They are analogous in terms of their significance and importance. To us, it is an important resource for water. Its management is extremely important, and for an experimental form of dealing with carbon emissions which may or may not have a future, I think the idea to root around is a great threat. I know that I see eye to eye with the mayor of the Goondiwindi Regional Council, which has a real stake in this because where the carbon was proposed to go is in the vicinity. I think it is just on the border between my electorate and the electorate of Warrego in the Goondiwindi Regional Council area. Water is drawn there from the Great Artesian Basin to supply intensive agriculture, piggeries and so forth, and an uninterrupted source of clean and fresh water is very important.

One of the reasons I have never supported this was vindicated about 18 months ago, when it was shown that CTSCo's EIS claimed that the sandstone precipice aquifer was saline and therefore there was nothing to lose. Well, that is news to the tens of thousands of people in Queensland who depend on the fresh potable water supplies they get from the precipice sandstone. When such a fundamental falsehood is advanced in the EIS submitted by CTSCo, you have to wonder how confident they are in the fundamental value of their project. Do they really have to manipulate things and advance falsehoods like that in order to get their way? I am firmly of the view that carbon dioxide should not be sequestered anywhere near the Great Artesian Basin. That has always been my view; it always will be. That is the way I will always exercise my vote if it comes before parliament.