




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2024

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

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.57 pm): As the shadow environment minister, I rise to make a brief contribution to the amendments to the Environmental Protection Act and the Greenhouse Gas Storage Act to prohibit greenhouse gas storage activities and greenhouse gas stream enhanced petroleum activities in the Great Artesian Basin. The LNP has never supported carbon capture storage or greenhouse gas storage projects in the Great Artesian Basin. We have long raised concerns about the potential impacts these projects could have on our domestic and agricultural water supplies and on our environment. We will not be opposing these amendments but we will be highlighting how disgraceful the process has been in bringing the bills to the House today.

The Great Artesian Basin is a vital and irreplaceable supply of water for many Queenslanders. We must never threaten its quality or safety. We thank the regional communities who advocated for this and the representative organisations—like the Queensland Farmers' Federation, AgForce and the Queensland Conservation Council—who joined the campaign. It was clear that regional communities overwhelmingly did not support this proposal.

In February, the LNP called on the Miles Labor government to reject it. Earlier this year the member for Gregory asked the Premier directly in parliament to rule out approving the proposal. The member for Warrego led the fight on behalf of her community to have this proposal properly assessed both scientifically and in terms of its local impact. The member highlighted how ministers made comments to mayors when they visited the region expressing their opposition to the proposal. The member for Callide would also like me to mention that he is apparently a geologist. He keeps that quite quiet, but he is very receptive to the needs of his community, and he is a very good geologist. Of course, the member for Southern Downs would like me to state that he is strongly opposed to this proposal as well.

The government should never have entertained threatening the Great Artesian Basin in the first place. If they were against this, why was it allowed to proceed so far? Why were licences granted only 18 months ago just to string these resource companies along? This is not how good government should be conducted. We need high environmental approval standards, but we also need to provide certainty for those who want to invest in Queensland. If a project is going to be rejected, that should be articulated by government as early as possible, certainly before millions of dollars are invested into doomed proposals. To introduce such a significant change today with only an hour's notice makes a mockery of our parliamentary processes. These amendments have been rushed through with no consultation not only bypassing a committee process where they could have been properly scrutinised but also not giving a single stakeholder the opportunity to provide their feedback.

Mr Butcher interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Member for Gladstone, your interjections are not being taken.

Mr O'CONNOR: This is contrary to the minister's own commitment to the resources industry which is enshrined in the Resources Industry Development Plan. The minister's plan states very clearly—

The government will consult with stakeholders on any regulatory change that has a material impact, and where appropriate ensure that it is subject to a 12-week consultation process consistent with the Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation.

With amendments introduced barely an hour before they were due to be debated, that clearly has not happened. It shows a disappointing lack of respect for industry.

The LNP will not treat our resources sector with such disdain. We need an end to Labor's constant chaos and crisis. Carbon capture and storage will have a role to play in Queensland's pathway to net zero. It will help us achieve emissions reductions in hard-to-abate industries. It just will not happen in the Great Artesian Basin.