

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Report No. 23 on the

South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

On 22 November 2012 the Finance and Administration Committee (the Committee) tabled its report (No.23) in relation to the *South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012* (the Report).

The Queensland Government response to the Report's recommendations and clarification on matters raised by the Committee are provided below.

RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 -

The Committee recommends that the *South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012* be passed.

Queensland Government response:

The Government thanks the Committee for its consideration of the Bill and appreciates the Committee's recommendation that the Bill be passed.

Recommendation 2 -

The Committee recommends that the department ensure that Rural Water Advisory Group be considered as part of the ongoing consultative processes.

Queensland Government response:

The Government supports the Committee recommendation. The Department of Energy and Water Supply will ensure the continuing Rural Water Advisory Group has adequate representation including where appropriate, the new Bulk Water Supply Authority.

Recommendation 3 –

The Committee recommends that the department consider whether an extension to the commencement dates stipulated in the regulation is warranted in view of the short timeframes available for implementation of the bill.

Queensland Government response:

The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation and has already taken the necessary steps to have Schedule 1 of the Water Fluoridation Regulation 2008 amended.

As indicated in the Committee's Report at Appendix D there a number of public potable water supplies that are required to fluoridate by 31 December 2012.

It is intended that if a public potable water supplier has not yet commenced fluoridation at one of these supplies or not been granted an exemption, the water supplier will be given an additional 12 months to comply with the requirements of the legislation. These suppliers will have until 31 December 2013 to either implement fluoridation or apply for an exemption under the new exemption criteria, if eligible.

A consultation draft of the proposed amendments to the Water Fluoridation Regulation 2008 was provided to the Local Government Association of Queensland; the Queensland Water Directorate and the 25 potable water suppliers directly affected by the proposed amendments.

There was general support for the amending regulation.

Recommendation 4 -

The Committee recommends that the department consider whether the bill needs to be amended to alter the title of the section 169 to reflect the extension of the application of the section.

Queensland Government response:

The Government notes the Committee's concern about the title of the section. As advised to the Committee, the Government will be consulting on a water restriction framework for South East Queensland in 2013. The Government considers it would be more appropriate to consider any legislative changes after the review is completed.

Additional matters:

Page 13 of the Committee's report cites advice from Queensland Treasury and Trade that approximately 30 out of 500 certified agreement staff will be affected by a change in weekly working hours as a result of the merger.

Subsequent advice from South East Queensland Bulk Water Company Limited indicates the number of staff affected is likely to be around 25, as

clarified in the submission to the Committee by the Director-General, Department of Energy and Water Supply of 16 November 2012.

On page 20 of the Committee's report it states that Qldwater advised the Committee that there are 104 schemes in the regulation that are or are to be fluoridated. There are in fact 134 schemes that are or are to be fluoridated in the current regulation.