

	SEATH HOLSWICH MP – STATE MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS
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SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT

30th October 2012

WATER LEGISLATION (DAM SAFETY AND WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION BILL

I rise to speak on the Water Legislation (Dam Safety and Water Supply Enhancement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 and offer some comments on just a few aspects of the bill as a member of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee, before which this bill went for examination.

This bill has several important purposes, including amending the water supply act 2008 to implement recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry relating to dam safety and flood mitigation; amending the Water Act 2000 regarding provisions for declaring temporary full-supply levels for flood mitigation dams; amending the water supply act around issues relating to failure impact assessments, recycled water schemes and non-urban water service providers; and amending the Electricity Act 1994 with regard to the reduction in the feed-in tariff for new small customers of solar energy.

As I was part of the committee's examination of the bill, I would like to express my thanks to the Department of Energy and Water Supply for their briefing, as well as the Queensland Farmers Federation, Queensland Conservation Council and Seqwater for their submissions on this bill.

I must declare a particular interest in certain aspects of this bill upfront, in particular the issues surrounding North Pine Dam. North Pine Dam falls entirely within the boundaries of my electorate, and the impact from significant rainfall and flooding that this dam has on my electorate and the neighbouring electorate of Kallangur has been significant in recent years, particularly during the January 2011 floods.

North Pine Dam has a significant difference in its storage capacity to Wivenhoe Dam in that it has no flood mitigation capacity. Once it hits 100 per cent capacity, as it did very rapidly in January 2011 and as it did several times during that wet season, the water simply has to be let out of the dam to prevent it spilling over the dam wall. We have seen all too clearly the adverse impacts of this downstream from North Pine Dam: substantial erosion, regular closures of Youngs Crossing Road and the irreparable damage to the northbound AJ Wyllie Bridge on Gympie Road at Lawnton.

I am eagerly anticipating the outcomes of the North Pine Dam Optimisation Study and its determination of whether or not North Pine Dam should continue to be operated under a flood mitigation

I also take this opportunity to comment on just a couple of the issues discussed by the committee during hearings and briefings. Firstly, with regard to recommendation 5, that committee recommends that the legislation provide flexibility in the time frames for providing an interim flood event report in light of the practical difficulties which may arise in some circumstances. I did have a few points to make about that, but I thank the minister for his clarification in his reply speech of the rationale behind that part of the bill. That certainly clarifies the situation.

The other issue is the declaration of temporary full-supply levels. That was another interesting discussion. Again, I am pleased to support the committee's conclusion about the proposal in the bill – that the control over temporary alteration of the full-supply levels of Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams should be a function of the responsible minister. As I have already mentioned a couple of times, it is vitally important that decisions, particularly regarding North Pine Dam, always recognise that there is no flood mitigation storage capacity and that it is located in an urban area. I know that those important facts will form part of the responsible minister's decisions regarding temporary full-supply levels in North Pine Dam.

Finally, I want to mention sections of the bill relating to the Queensland Solar Bonus Scheme. The scheme is certainly an admirable one. Of course, it is highly desirable to see consumers moving to various forms of renewable energy. Queensland's Solar Bonus Scheme commenced in June 2008 and by July 2012 had more than 205,000 solar PV systems being installed. The rate of uptake, which was no doubt higher than anticipated, means that the cost of the scheme through to its end date in 2028 would be substantially more than first thought. The spike in uptake after the government announced the end of the 44c feed-in tariff has also highlighted this issue further.

The problem that this scheme has created due to its own popularity is that the burden of cost to maintain our state's electricity network has been slowly shifting from all network users to those who either cannot afford or simply have not installed solar PV systems. It is simply not acceptable to our government to see that that burden falls to the consumers who can least afford it.

The new 8c feed-in tariff is comparable to the tariff offered by other states and I commend the minister for tasking the Queensland Competition Authority to review the feed-in tariff rate and to make recommendations on an ongoing fair and reasonable feed-in tariff rate.

In closing, I again thank the department as well as those stakeholders who participated in the process through their submissions. I also thank our committee chair, the member for Mirani, and the committee secretariat for their work in providing briefing papers and coordinating this process. This bill contains some important policy proposals and, after the committee's scrutiny of the bill, I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.