1. The Water Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment Bill 2014(the Bill) amends the *Water Act 2000* (Water Act) and the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. It addresses the process for making a water supply emergency declaration and imposing emergency water restrictions; the declaration of a temporary full supply level; and the governance framework for category 1 water authorities. The Bill also amends the Queensland *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005* (Qld WELS Act) to align with the Commonwealth *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005* (Commonwealth Act).
2. The Minister can direct water service providers to impose water restrictions in emergency situations under an emergency water supply declaration. However, Governor in Council approval and gazettal is required for giving effect to a declaration. Even in an emergency, service provider water restrictions do not apply until the day after notice of the restrictions is given to affected customers. These processes limit the effectiveness and practical use of a declaration in response to short-term emergencies. The Bill will remove the Governor in Council approval and gazettal requirements and provide instead for an emergency declaration to commence when made by the Minister and provide for service provider emergency water restrictions to commence on the same day they are announced.
3. Currently the Minister may also, by gazette notice, declare a temporary full supply level for dams that operate under an approved flood mitigation manual, to mitigate the impacts of a potential flood or drought. The Bill will enable a declaration to have effect on being given to the dam owner removing any potential delay in the dam owner taking action to draw down the dam. The Bill also clarifies the procedures for dam owners seeking approval of alternative operating procedures during flood events.
4. The WELS scheme provides for a single point of registration for WELS products (toilets, taps, showers, washing machines) and for the Commonwealth to be the regulator. The scheme was amended in response to recommendations of the independent review conducted in 2010. The Joint Governments (the Commonwealth and all States and Territories) agreed to changes to the governance, compliance and administration of the scheme, including measures to improve the level of cost recovery from product registration fees, the introduction of civil penalties and additional enforcement options. The Bill will amend the Qld WELS Act to bring it into alignment with the Commonwealth Act.
5. The Bill improves governance arrangements for category 1 water authorities (Gladstone Area Water Board and Mount Isa Water Board) which operate on a commercial basis, similar to government owned corporations (GOCs). The Bill will remove redundant provisions and align requirements with commercial business practices.
6. The Bill will amend the Water Act to include the Noosa Shire in the definition of the South East Queensland region following the council’s separation from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in January 2014 and omit redundant provisions from the Water Act referencing the former Queensland Water Commission following its abolition.
7. Cabinet approved that the Water Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment Bill 2014be introduced into the Legislative Assembly.
8. *Attachments*
* [Water Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment Bill 2014](Attachments/Bill.pdf)
* [Explanatory Notes](Attachments/ExNotes.pdf)