1. The South East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Amendment Bill 2012 (the Bill) proposes to remove the special industrial relations measures, in particular the Workforce Frameworks, that were mandated by the former Government to apply to council employees who transferred to the South East Queensland (SEQ) distributor-retailers and for those Allconnex Water (Allconnex) employees transferring back to Gold Coast, Logan and Redland City Councils.
2. The Bill will have the effect of shortening the application of the 2009 Workforce Framework by one year and prevent the 2012 Workforce Framework from having effect.
3. The 2009 Workforce Framework applied in relation to the original water reform project in 2010 when council staff were transferred to one of the three distributor-retailers, Queensland Urban Utilities, Unitywater and Allconnex. Originally, the framework was to operate for approximately three years from 1 July 2010 (or from when the affected employee transferred to Allconnex).
4. The 2012 Workforce Framework applied in relation to the upcoming retransfers of employees from Allconnex back to councils, in light of the wind up of Allconnex.
5. Both frameworks provide particular job security and other entitlements in relation to the reform agendas. In particular, a period of ‘no forced redundancy’ protections, travel and relocation allowances, and salary maintenance provisions were mandated under the arrangements. These items add significant operating costs.
6. In addition, the Bill proposes to remove transitional period protections applying to Allconnex staff after retransfer back to council. These continued the relevant industrial relations arrangements which applied to staff whilst they were at Allconnex, until such time as the Gold Coast, Redland and Logan City Councils could make new Enterprise Bargaining Agreements for retransferred staff. These provisions will be removed from 30 June 2012 so that the participating councils’ existing Enterprise Bargaining Agreement arrangements will apply to retransferred employees (where the agreement allows).
7. This raft of additional industrial relations measures were put in place by the former Government. The Bill proposes to remove these additional measures and allow local governments the flexibility to apply the ordinary lawful industrial relations measures as for all of their other employees.
8. Cabinet approved that the South East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) (Workforce Framework) Amendment Bill 2012 be introduced into the Legislative Assembly.
9. Attachments
* [South East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) (Workforce Framework) Amendment Bill 2012](attachments/SEQWaterAmB12.pdf)
* [Explanatory Notes for the Bill](attachments/SEQWaterAmB12Exp.pdf)