

**Legislative Council (2016-05-04)****Classification: Bills****WATER NSW AMENDMENT (STAFF TRANSFERS) BILL 2016***First Reading*

**Bill introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Nial Blair.**

*Second Reading*

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Lands and Water ( 11:43 )):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The management of water in New South Wales is an important issue that is vital for the ongoing prosperity of the State. The future health and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales is dependent on the efficient and effective management of our State's water resources. For this reason, it is important that the Government put the best structure in place to ensure that the delivery of water in New South Wales is both streamlined and effective. The Government has been undertaking reforms to the management of water, including the merge of the Sydney Catchment Authority and the State Water Corporation in 2014 to become WaterNSW. Following on from that reform, additional functions are now being transferred to WaterNSW to streamline and clarify responsibilities between different water managers.

I will now provide a brief overview of the elements of the bill. This bill will amend the WaterNSW Act 2014 to enable the transfer of employees from the Department of Industry Skills and Regional Development to WaterNSW. This is a machinery of government change to ensure that WaterNSW is able to perform its functions. It is important that WaterNSW has the corporate knowledge necessary to perform the functions that are being transferred so that the management of customers is not disrupted.

This bill seeks to enable the Minister to make an order to transfer the relevant staff to WaterNSW while preserving all of their existing entitlements to superannuation and leave and providing for continuity of service. This is the best way to ensure that certainty is provided to these staff. Consultation is occurring with the Public Service Association of NSW about the impacts on staff and they will continue to be engaged through this process. The bill also seeks to put in place transitional provisions which would allow pending licence applications and existing compliance notices to be transferred to WaterNSW where the relevant function is to be transferred. This will facilitate the transfer of functions and ensure that there is not duplication between the Government and WaterNSW.

I have briefed those opposite and the crossbench to outline the importance of having a mechanism that ensures existing entitlements to superannuation and leave are preserved. There are potentially up to 247 staff that may be transferred between the department and WaterNSW over the next year. The majority of staff to be transferred are based in the Sydney metropolitan area. These staff need to know that their entitlements are protected and that we have an efficient mechanism to facilitate these moves. This mechanism alleviates the need for wholesale redundancies and re-recruitment of staff, and means any redundancies will be focused solely on efficiency gains and will be voluntary.

The effective and efficient management of water in New South Wales is an issue that affects us all. The Government is committed to reforming the management of water to ensure that it achieves the best possible outcomes for the people of New South Wales. This bill will facilitate the more efficient allocation of responsibilities for management of water in New South Wales by allowing for the transfer of staff from the Department of Primary Industries to WaterNSW. I commend the Water NSW Amendment (Staff Transfers) Bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**