

**INQUIRY INTO CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (WATER  
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY) BILL 2020  
AND THE PROVISIONS OF THE WATER MANAGEMENT  
AMENDMENT (TRANSPARENCY OF WATER RIGHTS)  
BILL 2020 AND THE WATER MANAGEMENT  
AMENDMENT (WATER ALLOCATIONS - DROUGHT  
INFORMATION) BILL 2020**

**Organisation:** Pauline Hanson's One Nation NSW

**Date Received:** 8 July 2020

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#### **Portfolio Committee No.4**

### **INQUIRY INTO WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (TRANSPARENCY OF WATER RIGHTS) BILL 2020**

#### **SUBMISSION BY PAULINE HANSON'S ONE NATION NEW SOUTH WALES**

It is our party's position that water management, allocation and ownership is the single biggest issue facing the agricultural industry. This issue has a huge and potentially detrimental effect on towns and cities in rural and regional New South Wales.

We have heard numerous times from frustrated people regarding current water administration arrangements.

One of the biggest concerns of our rural constituents is not only the management and allocation of water but the lack of transparency surrounding the ownership of water.

The consequence of separating water from the land and turning it into a tradable commodity has led to unforeseen problems. The main being, corporate entities whose ownership of water is solely for the purpose of profit through speculative trades.

We believe that the original intention of a tradeable water market was a step in the right direction. This allowed primary producers the ability to on-sell their water allocations. In turn, this provided them with flexibility and opportunities to supplement and support their farm income.

However, the entry of corporate speculators into the marketplace has distorted the market, forcing water prices to levels that have decreased the accessibility to water for the majority of producers which has in turn threatened their livelihood and sustainability.

This practice has caused great angst and concern to not only primary producers but also rural and regional towns that rely on the agricultural industry and their commercial inputs. Unfortunately, this has been exacerbated during the recent drought.

One small step in the process of restoring confidence to the agricultural industry is transparency in the ownership of water rights.

It is the belief of One Nation New South Wales the Bill is a step in the right direction.

We support the three main objectives of the Bill.

Firstly, it will make a search of the online water register easier to navigate by broadening the search fields. At present a search is conducted using only the water access licence number. The Bill expands a search to include names of individuals or corporations. A search could also be conducted by way of an ABN number or even by way of the irrigation scheme itself.

Secondly, it imposes new requirements relating to information to be provided by applicants for water access licences. It means that more information needs to be provided in the application process including but not limited to the names of directors, major shareholders and other related bodies corporate.

It will also be necessary for applicants to provide details of the purpose for which the water access licence is sought and any land where water, taken under the licence, will be used. Individuals can no longer hide their identity when applying for a licence.

The third and arguably most important objective of the Bill, is the requirement of Members of Parliament and their spouses to disclose any interests in water access licences they may hold. At present there is no obligation on Members to disclose ownership of water. Members are required to disclose amongst other things, real estate holdings and shareholdings. With water being a tradeable commodity it is only right that Members who own water rights should declare same on their pecuniary interest form. With water (its ownership, allocation and management) being such a vexed issue in rural communities, it is absolutely necessary that Members of Parliament are completely transparent in their dealings with this valuable and limited resource.

Our party recognises this is just a small step in the challenge of providing a fair, just and workable scheme to manage and allocate a precious resource that is water. Notwithstanding it is a small step, it is a necessary and much needed one. It will go some way to providing transparency surrounding water management, a vital step towards building confidence in the agricultural industry.

One Nation New South Wales fully supports the objectives of the Bill.

Rod Roberts MLC