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MEMBER: Mr KING

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (8.42 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026. As a member of the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee, which conducted the inquiry into this bill, I want to start by acknowledging the work that went into this inquiry and every inquiry we do—by the secretariat, parliamentary and departmental staff, my colleagues on the committee and the many individuals and organisations that made submissions and gave evidence at our public hearings. I want to acknowledge the member for Noosa, who came to our public hearing in Caloundra. We were happy to provide time for her questions on the bill. It was also nice to see former Labor member Jason Hunt take an interest and make it along for a bit. The member for Pumicestone also came and asked some questions. It is good that it attracted a lot of interest from people in the area.

What is the point of this bill? No, that is not a rhetorical question, although some stakeholders probably think it should be. This bill will establish a new statutory body, the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority, to manage defined waterways from the Pumicestone Passage in the north of the mighty City of Moreton Bay region, to the Noosa lakes and Noosa River in the Noosa Council area and the Maroochy and Mooloolah rivers which run through the Sunshine Coast Council's patch.

What does managing the waterways entail? The responsibilities of the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority will include: strategic planning and delivery program; installation and maintenance of infrastructure; management of navigational access to the waterways; and monitoring and management of sand and sediment movement in the waterways and adjacent coastal waters and land. The bill also transfers powers from the department of transport or transport minister to the new authority. We will probably see some LNP mates appointed to that board. Watch this space.

A couple of concerning themes were raised during our inquiry, and I will run through them for the record. We heard concerns that modelling this statutory authority on the Gold Coast Waterways Authority might not work as the nature of the waterways is vastly different and there are three councils to deal with the authority on the Sunshine Coast, not just one. The councils raised that as a concern. We heard the member for Noosa ask about funding: would there be more money for the waterways or would the authority be managing or repurposing the finite funding already committed via state government departments? I do not believe we got a clear answer on that. We heard the Moreton Bay Ramsar protected wetlands could be at risk because the LNP has failed to consider federal environmental legislation. That is another thing that was raised.

A consistent question from stakeholders during our parliamentary inquiry was about the definition of sustainability. Unfortunately, there was no definition for sustainability in this bill. Stakeholders, particularly environmental groups active along the waterways, voiced significant concerns that a lack of definition equated to a lack of prioritising sustainability in our waterways.

We also heard concerns from representatives of the three councils the new authority will overlap that they would not have a seat on the board, despite having significant shared interests. I asked a question of the council representatives during our hearing about whether a similar model—that is, Unitywater, which is run by all three councils, where councils are stakeholders with direct communications—might work here. I would ask the minister to consider giving councils a voice to see if that would work.

Further concerns were expressed across stakeholder groups about what expertise, if any, the members of the authority board would be required to have. No doubt some of them, like me, are worried that the only requirement might be that you have to be an LNP mate. I know we will be watching closely as the details of the board composition and qualifications are announced by the Crisafulli LNP government. We are told it will be an independent board appointed by the government, so watch this space.

There are two more key concerns I want to address. Firstly, perhaps most disappointing is the lack of consultation with the First Nations communities, specifically the Kabi Kabi people who are the traditional owners and native title holders of these waterways. I want to pay my respects to them and

thank the representatives who participated in our inquiry. I hope the government can show some respect by including their representation in the waterways board. I will not be holding my breath on that one, either. Lastly, and again this probably comes as no surprise, we heard from the stakeholders who gave evidence—and I did hear it mentioned earlier—that most of them felt there was a failure to consult with them properly about the establishment of this new authority.

On balance, we are giving the government the benefit of the doubt on claims that this bill, in establishing this Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority, will do the following: improve coordination in a complex system of intertwined regulations; strengthen planning and delivery outcomes for users of the waterways, entities who caretake them and residents who live along them; and enhance operational effectiveness. Bearing in mind that a triennial review of the authority's operation will provide future opportunities for stakeholders to put forward positive changes, there is broad support for the intent of the bill. Even though the stakeholders did not agree with a lot of the bill, I sincerely hope this authority works out for the Sunshine Coast and does some good.