



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Hansard 9 June 1999

BURNETT WATER STORAGE

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.32 p.m.): What a disgraceful contribution by Government members! I can sum it up very simply by saying that if bulldust could be put into music, those opposite would have a symphony orchestra.

After six years of Goss Labor Government, in 1996 I set up the Water Infrastructure Task Force. It reported on 28 February 1997. It recommended that the Burnett River catchment be a Category 1 priority for the regional planning assessment study of the Burnett River. The implementation plan also made an assessment of Paradise dam, Stage 1 and Stage 2. It stated that the Stage 1 development would be to meet current and short-term needs for the Bundaberg irrigation area and that Stage 2 would be to meet future needs in the Bundaberg and Isis areas. That development was to cost in the order of \$247m. The \$2m Burnett River catchment planning and assessment study to evaluate structural and non-structural options to meet assessed future demands resulted in a framework being put in place so that future developments on that Burnett catchment would be carried out in a very sustainable and professional manner.

The proposal was put up by the Bundaberg and Isis region local management group. A site 131.2 kilometres upstream was proposed. The nominated preference was known as the Paradise dam but there were two other sites—Kalliwa and Mingo Crossing. The proposed development had a Stage 1 capacity of 740,000 megalitres, with a yield of 203,000 megalitres. Stage 2 had a capacity of 185,000 megalitres, with a 331,000 megalitre yield. Costs included future distribution upgrades. The Burnett catchment study, to which \$2m has been allocated, will rigorously assess demands, evaluate options and compare the relative merits and impacts to arrive at a preferred development strategy to achieve maximum regional economic benefit.

On numerous occasions when I have spoken to people in the Bundaberg and Burnett regions the major problem raised has been the shortage of water. Industry and the councils were desperately in need of more water for urban and regional development to stop the salt intrusion in underground water supplies—all backed up by the Water Infrastructure Task Force. The members opposite have been going slow on all of these water projects. They know that they have been going slow. We have been talking to the people.

Mr WELFORD: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Warrego is grossly misrepresenting the facts. We accelerated the process. We did not go slow; we have accelerated the process.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr HOBBS: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is another point of order against you.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The Minister is misleading the House. The Nangram weir was to be finished in June this year. It has not even started under this Government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Was that a point of order against the Minister or a point of order against the speaker? That is rather unusual.

Mr HOBBS: In July 1997 I met again with the local industry and local government. I, along with my director-general, indicated that DNR would get on with the various technical assessments for the Paradise dam. We would continue with other necessary studies in the context of the regional study and the WAMP and set up the reference panels.

We used consultants for many of the study components to assist DNR to keep to the timetables. It was expected that the dam would be constructed within five years. That would mean that it would be up and running in 2002. In subsequent months I was shown prospective dam site details. Now the Minister is not even listening. He reckons that he started this process. He has the details. The progress was made in parallel with the WAMP and catchment studies. We had four or five different consultants working on this particular project.

Mr Welford: I see.

Mr HOBBS: The Minister did not know about that, did he? He forgot about them. They were working to try to progress this. We were fair dinkum about getting this project up and running. The preliminary studies showed that adequate volumes of water were available.

It is possible to run the different aspects of the project in parallel. It takes a long time to build a dam and a long time to do the studies, but things can be done in parallel. I believe that we were making a responsible assessment of the project. Salt intrusion was starting like a cancer. The social demands of the community were there, as were the requirements for rural development. We had to get on with the job. These projects were put in place. How can the Minister say with a straight face that the Labor Government started those projects? It did not start those projects. They were going before Labor came to Government. They were started under my administration and that of our deputy leader. This Minister is a Johnny-come-lately.
