



Speech by

**Hon. J. ELDER**

**MEMBER FOR CAPALABA**

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Hansard 9 June 1999

### **BURNETT WATER STORAGE**

**Hon. J. P. ELDER** (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (6.12 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Remove all words after 'That this Parliament' and insert—

'will continue to support the long-term water needs of all regions of Queensland, including the Burnett, with a proactive approach to catchment planning, WAMPS, improved water efficiency and community involvement to ensure security of water resources is achieved in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.'

Interestingly, over the past few weeks we have had a succession of debates on the regional forest agreement—something which I have noticed members opposite are not nearly as keen to talk about in the past week. This week the only mention of RFAs was on Tuesday in a question that was asked of me in question time. In the course of this debate members opposite have been very keen to jump on one issue. Over and over again in relation to RFAs, members opposite keep saying, "You must have a scientific solution. You must use science. You must use logic. You must have a scientific outcome." That is what they keep saying.

Let us have a look at what they are saying now in relation to a major storage on the Burnett River. They are now saying, "Hang the science. Hang the logic. Don't worry about the capacity of the dam or the impact on the river system or water flows. Just build it." That is the typical National Party response: "Don't you worry about that." That is exactly what they are saying in relation to this issue.

The Premier said that a dam would be built subject to environmental studies. That is contained in the first paragraph in the article from the Bundaberg News-Mail that the honourable member has been quoting constantly. The second paragraph of the article stated that the Premier said that he was not going to make silly commitments on the campaign trail. It is as simple as that.

Let us nail the strength of what we are doing. We are conducting a WAMP in consultation with the local community. That means that a detailed study of stream flows will be used to determine the available resource, present commitments and environmental needs. I am advised by the Minister for Natural Resources that that will be ready in the first half of next year. Guess what? That is well inside the five-year time frame. The Premier's statement was made in 1998. If we add five years, that takes us through to the year 2003. Next year just happens to be the year 2000. We are right on target in relation to that commitment. However, we are acting on scientific advice. Members opposite will not accept it, and I do not expect them to. They just do things when it suits them. The old National Party trick was to say, "Don't you worry about that." They use a scientific argument when it suits them.

The member for Burnett is a problem for the member for Bundaberg, because she carries his workload. If we were to ask anyone in Bundaberg who looks after the problems of constituents in the Burnett, they would tell us that it is the member for Bundaberg. Time and time again when I have been up there I have been told that the problem of the member for Burnett is that he does not visit Bundaberg. He spends more time in Brisbane than he does in his electorate.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr ELDER:** If the member for Callide read the newspapers up there, he would see ads placed by the member for Burnett that tell people to phone him at his parliamentary office. Where is that? Here! But he is never here. He is never in his electorate and he is never here to answer the phone calls from his paid ads. Where is he? Is he with the latte set at Park Road or at the Coffee Club at Cleveland? The fact of the matter is that he is never in his electorate. He has not been surfacing in his electorate. He has left that to the member for Bundaberg. The fact is that, if he spent more time there, he would know exactly what the people in his electorate are saying about this issue. He would know that they are comfortable with the approach that this Government has taken.

A few weeks ago I was in Bundaberg speaking with all of the local mayors. They were not all that impressed by the contribution from the member for Burnett in addressing the issues that they were bringing forward. He knows that. He would know that a couple of mayors have taken a really keen interest in the member's performance. If I were him, I would be watching my back. His performance has been shameful.

Time expired.

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