



Speech by

Mr JIM PEARCE

MEMBER FOR FITZROY

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BURNETT WATER STORAGE

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (6.47 p.m.): What great timing the National Party has. The very day that it brings on this debate and the very day that it continues its scare campaign about how dams in regional Queensland have been frozen is the day that this Government has given the go-ahead for the \$4.2m refurbishment of the Moura Weir on the Dawson River. The new boundaries have not even been confirmed yet, and I am down there delivering to the people in rural Queensland.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr PEARCE: If ever there was a sign——

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr PEARCE:—of this Government's commitment——

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEARCE:—to providing water in regional Queensland, then——

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HOBBS: I would just like to point out that the member can thank me for starting that program.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I call the honourable member for Fitzroy.

Mr PEARCE: The member did nothing. If ever there was a sign of this Government's commitment to providing water in regional Queensland, then today's announcement is a sign of better things to come. This Government is getting on with the job.

Over the past year, we have seen a wonderful scare campaign from members opposite about all sorts of things. That is because they have been running scared about One Nation. One Nation ran the mother of all scare campaigns, promising to turn back the clock to the 1960s. So what did the Nationals do? They started promising to turn back the clock to the 1950s.

Let us be quite clear about this. Times have changed. We do not go around bunging in dams close to our mates' places so that they can clean up on the benefits. These days, we actually go through the WAMP process so that there is a scientific basis for where we put dams. We are going through the Fitzroy Basin WAMP process at the moment in my electorate. Sensible people in central Queensland are saying that this is the way to go. I will tell members opposite something. This is going to hurt them, they are not going to like it, and I am going to get a great deal of pleasure out of saying this. I get around a lot, talking to people out there in rural Queensland, and do members know what the National Party supporters are telling me out there? They are saying that they have confidence in a Labor Government putting in place the proper water structure that is needed. And do members know why they have confidence in us? Because they know that we can get on with it without having corrupt influences telling us where to put dams.

This motion is clearly aimed at getting the member for Burnett off the hook. When the coalition was in Government he did nothing for Bundaberg and the surrounding region. As the member for Logan said last night, when the coalition was in Government it could not even deliver a pizza.

Last week I received a phone call concerning the member for Burnett. The caller was asking about workers compensation. I said, "Mate, according to protocol, you should go to your local member." Do honourable members know what he said to me? He said, "He's never home." He said, "He's about as handy as an ashtray on a motor bike."

Mr Cooper: Can you say that again?

Mr PEARCE: He said, "He's about as handy as an ashtray on a motor bike." He is a do-nothing member.

What has happened here is that the member for Surfers Paradise, in the dying days of his term in office, lobbed into Bundaberg—as he did in my electorate—after the Nationals saw the threat of One Nation and promised to build a dam within five years, subject to proper studies being done. What did the Labor Premier do? He supported the need for a dam, but he said that it would be after a proper assessment process. If anything, those of us on this side of the House are ahead. We are ahead of what those opposite promised. The WAMP should be ready in the first half of next year, which will allow plenty of time for it to be finished within five years.

It is interesting to contrast the present language of the powder puff, never-at-home member for Burnett with what he said when he was in Government and had the opportunity to actually do something. I quote directly from his media statement of 15 May 1997 in which he said—

"The Government is expediting all the necessary environmental and technical studies for these projects and for Paradise Dam. However we cannot pre-empt the findings of those key reports."

He went on to say—

"The necessity for proper environmental impact assessment has been highlighted by the recent scrapping of the Comet Dam after studies showed that significant environmental damage would occur if the dam proceeded."

It was okay for him to say that when he was in Government, but now that he is in Opposition he has a different opinion. The problem is that he is not fair dinkum.

I want to try to introduce some commonsense into this debate about water because the availability of water has been and will continue to be of significant importance to the development of Queensland.

Time expired.