



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cooperative Research Centres

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: Last month my ministerial colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development informed the House that 16 of the 26 cooperative research centres to receive Federal Government funding would have a strong presence in Queensland. Those CRCs are designed to encourage collaboration between industry, educational institutions and Government, bringing together outstanding research groups to develop leading edge research. Six of the CRCs are related to environmental and land use research. My Department of Natural Resources is a partner, with others, in many of these CRCs.

I wish to outline some of the CRCs involved. The CRC for catchment hydrology has identified work in the Brisbane River and Fitzroy catchments in Queensland and commenced planning of activities in these catchments. The CRC for freshwater ecology, which includes the northern Murray-Darling Basin and the establishment of a laboratory at Goondiwindi, has been addressing the degradation of our river systems and the most appropriate approaches to the sustainable management of environmental flows to protect river health. The CRC will identify ways to maintain and restore riverine environments and improve the viability of habitats. A new CRC, the CRC for terrestrial carbon accounting, will address some of the priority issues to improve the management of the land use and forestry components of the terrestrial carbon cycles. The CRC for tropical rainforest ecology, located north of Cairns, will have an expanded role to include areas of tropical and subtropical rainforests.

However, the major success story is the new CRC to be based at the proposed natural sciences precinct at Indooroopilly. This is the CRC for coastal zone, estuary and waterway management, which aims to achieve international leadership in the sustainable management of our coastal zone. This work is especially important for Queensland, where our coastline has major environmental and economic importance. The Beattie Government is supporting this research with funding of \$100,000 in cash and \$700,000 of in-kind contributions. The CRC will address the coastal zone from the upper tidal limit to the extent of land impact in the near coastal waters.

The application for the CRC was championed by myself and my Department of Natural Resources. Now, for the first time, there will be a concerted effort to provide sound science for improved policies and planning for sustainable development in an area where over 90% of Australians live and conduct their business. This research project will focus initially on three catchments, the Fitzroy catchment, the industrial catchment of Port Curtis and the urban catchment of the Brisbane River and its tributaries. It will expand to other catchments with time. It will have important links with small to medium sized enterprises and community and catchment groups to ensure that research results have a practical application as soon as possible.

The objectives of all of the CRCs are to bridge the gaps between science and the community, and between science and decision-making and policy and planning. These objectives address crucial issues such as integrated planning, sustainability, and the continued prosperity of the coastal zone by protecting our coastal assets. Collectively, the CRCs will attract new staff, train many new PhD students and provide major stimuli to the work of Government and local government agencies in Queensland. Working together, they provide the largest concerted effort to research the major issues facing natural resources and environmental management and planning that we have seen for a long time. The support being provided by the Beattie Government in facilitating these CRCs will contribute to their success and produce long-term benefits for the people of Queensland.