



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 11 March 1999

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.19 a.m.): Water infrastructure is the single most important factor in Government job creation. I call on this Government to lift its freeze on water infrastructure projects. I suggest that it does it now to get the bush moving again. Eight months have gone by since this Government came to office and not one single water project has been progressed. That is an absolute disgrace!

Three dams have been axed—the Finch Hatton dam, the St Helens Creek dam in Mackay and the Flinders River dam near Richmond. The Minister did not even let the Richmond Shire know. The shire chairman heard about it on the radio. That is a pretty poor effort on the part of the Minister—not good at all.

The Nathan dam and the Paradise dam are on hold. Frozen are the Cooranga weir and the Walla Weir, and seven major water projects have been stalled. We have seen the axing of countless thousands of jobs and the freezing of many more thousands. Not only are we losing planning jobs, engineering jobs, construction jobs, tourism and environmental jobs, but we are losing primary production jobs—people to grow vegetables, people to grow fruit, people to grow grain and people to grow cotton—and water for the mining industry. There is a potential there for thousands of long-term jobs—a potential to open up and expand the bush.

There is an old saying: if the bush is doing well, so is everyone else. But the bush is not a priority of this Government. It does not understand it. It does not want to understand it. It is interested only in more regulations, tightening the screws, no compensation, jacking up costs and taking away services. I am calling on the Government to get some vision and get some excitement back into the bush.
