



Speech by

**Hon. V. LESTER**

**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Hansard 9 June 1999

### **BURNETT WATER STORAGE**

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (6.07 p.m.): I second the motion. It is indicative of this can't do Beattie Government that, once again, the Opposition has to come into this House and try to hold this Government to its election promises. That is a shameful thing. The Beattie Government ran its election campaign on the platform of jobs. It was going to be a can-do Government, but so far the Government's performance has been absolutely dismal.

Tonight we are debating one of the biggest issues in the Burnett region: water or the lack of it and the Beattie Government's will or lack of it to fix the problem. So important is the issue of water to the Burnett region that the current member for Bundaberg made it a key plank of her election campaign. In fact, on 3 June 1998 at her campaign launch she said—

"In Bundaberg the major issues are jobs and water, and very early after the election I would hope to have the relevant Ministers here in Bundaberg to assess the possibility of fast-tracking a major water storage like Paradise dam."

Those relevant Ministers have visited Bundaberg, but the fast-tracking of a major water storage project has proved to be nothing more than a mirage on the horizon for the Burnett fruit and vegetable industry, the sugar industry, and the near 30% of young people who, unfortunately, remain unemployed in the region. The Opposition has not moved an unrealistic motion tonight. All members should be very clear that this motion simply calls on the Beattie Government to honour the Premier's pre-election promise.

Back on 11 June 1998 the then Opposition Leader matched the Borbidge Government's commitment and promised to build a major water storage facility in the area within five years. However, he went further than that. He went on to criticise the dam's evaluation process, claiming that it was dragging and that one consultation process begins as another one finishes. In the main street he told reporters that, if possible, they should be simultaneous. But now in spite of these criticisms and the now Premier's promise, the Burnett water storage has been consigned to the growing list of major water projects frozen by the Beattie Government. The Premier's criticisms have come back to haunt him.

Only last week the Minister for Natural Resources visited Bundaberg to proclaim that it would be another 24 months before a site for the dam was even identified. Then the Burnett WAMP would be completed and only then, according to a Bundaberg News-Mail report in the first week of February, the Department of Natural Resources would introduce the impact assessment study for the new storage. What about the Premier's commitment to running these studies concurrently? It has been absolutely forgotten. What has the Minister for Natural Resources been doing in the nearly 12 months since the election to fulfil Labor's pre-election promises? Unfortunately, nothing! What has the Beattie Government been doing to deliver on the coalition's \$12.5m water augmentation projects on the Burnett, the raising of the Walla Weir, the Bucca Weir and the Jones Weir—projects that will deliver another 21,000 megalitres to the Burnett region? Again, the answer is: nothing. The inaction of the Beattie Government in respect of water development and job creation is consistent. It has squibbed on the big projects and on the smaller projects. Meanwhile, farmers and other industries in the Burnett that need water have been left high and dry and the 30% unemployed have been left stranded.

The member for Bundaberg is squirming in her seat, and well she should be. Her election platform of water and jobs is looking decidedly rickety. The Beattie Government will not deliver on water

or jobs. If the member for Bundaberg is genuinely committed to providing water for the Burnett region and jobs for the people in her electorate, she would cross the floor tonight and support our motion. She would support the holding of the Beattie Government to its pre-election promises. If the member for Bundaberg does not hold her Government accountable and stand up for the people in her electorate, her electoral platform and credibility may well come under scrutiny and she will come crashing down at the next election.

Time expired.

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