



Speech by
**Mrs NITA
CUNNINGHAM**

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard 4 October 2000

WATER ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg— ALP) (6.29 p.m.): I am pleased to support the Minister's amendment to the motion, an amendment that supports his and this Government's commitment to delivering sound, long-term water planning for Queensland and security and certainty to water users throughout this State. In my electorate of Bundaberg people have been waiting for 30 years for successive Governments to build an extra dam which was an essential part of the Bundaberg irrigation scheme yet was abandoned by the coalition, leaving us for 30 years with an unfinished scheme. All we ever got were promises.

In just over two years, this Beattie Labor Government has already made a difference and brought some hope to the people of the entire Burnett catchment. In just over two years, this Government has escalated the WAMP and planning processes, included economic and social assessments in the WAMP process and provided \$9.5m in the current Budget for land acquisition. After years of ongoing consultation with rural industries, councils, water users and departments, in Bundaberg today there is a feeling of confidence as this all draws to a close. The Burnett catchment care study has been launched. The Burnett Water Development Group's work is almost complete and the consultation period for the WAMP will close in just nine days' time. Our farmers, councils, industries and residents can see that this Government is working hard to resolve the chronic water shortage that has plagued our district for so many years.

The real reason for the Opposition's motion tonight is that it is worried that everything is going too well. It is trying to muddy the waters, make the farmers angry and destabilise the process. We saw this same process used with the RFA, with similar Opposition motions and organised protests. However, as a result of the RFA, we now have a timber industry with 25-year guarantees of supply. I was recently told by one local sawmiller that the timber industry can now move and expand into value-added industries and provide jobs without the stifling insecurity of the past 10 years.

The Opposition's scaremongering has been shown up by its opposition to everything that is positive and progressive. Examples include the Native Title Act, which will now allow mining exploration to proceed after years of insecurity; vegetation management; the east coast trawl management, which has had that industry stalled for almost 10 years; and the recent Water Bill, which brought a 90-year old Act into the 21st century and provides a fair water management system, security of supply, specific entitlements and the ability to trade excess water to provide greater certainty to all water users.

However, tonight the Opposition wants an adjustment package or compensation for those who might—and I repeat might—be adversely affected by the WAMP. This is curious. What it is suggesting is that Queensland taxpayers should fund compensation for any loss of past allocations that had never been saleable or transferable without the farm, had never been secure and never subject to compensation. In fact, current allocations could always be withdrawn at any time without any suggestion of compensation. This was always the case, and the Opposition did nothing to change it in all the years it was in Government.

In areas of this State, major users have been given allocations by their mates far in excess of their needs. These allocations have never been used; they have sat idle. What is worse, they have tied up water that is desperately needed by others. Does the Opposition really believe that those people should now be paid compensation for that part they have never needed or used? I have been to a

number of water meetings in the past few months in Bundaberg. I can tell the House that not once have I been asked about compensation—not once—because the farmers all know that they have never been entitled to it, something the National Party presided over. They all know that the WAMP process will provide the security that they deserve. Our rural industries need security. This Government will continue to support them and consult with them to ensure that there is responsible, secure and sustainable water management in Queensland.
