



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Hansard 12 December 2001

**WATER INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT [BURNETT BASIN] AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (4.34 p.m.): I am pleased to support the Water Infrastructure Development (Burnett Basin) Amendment Bill 2001. It is important in considering this legislation today to keep in mind that there has been continuous development and review of possible additional storages throughout the Burnett catchment and of alternatives to water storages for many years. The Burnett River catchment appraisal study was something of a clearinghouse in this respect, analysing 64 possible developments. Therefore, those who have quite properly expressed their concern about elements of this legislation should take into account that this is not some new idea suddenly thought of and not properly considered over a long period.

In fact, the environmental impact study for the Burnett River Dam itself considered several alternative sites for the dam. The site near the old town of Paradise has been considered the most appropriate as it could meet capacity requirements with the least social and environmental impacts. Therefore, what we have to say to all of those who have expressed their concern is that we have considered all site options and the best way to deliver water capacity to the entire region is through the network of water storages planned in the bill.

There are five water infrastructure projects planned for the Burnett region. Together the projects are designed to generate social and economic benefits for the entire Burnett River catchment area. The placement of the water storages has been decided on the basis of years of research and considering where the demand for water is and how best this can be met both in the near future and the longer term future. We have to keep in mind as well that the region has been severely drought affected, particularly over the past few years, so nominal water allocations are already currently fully utilised. The additional water that is likely to be made available through the five projects is likely, therefore, to be in strong demand.

Let us consider for a moment the kinds of benefits that may flow, as it were, to the whole region when the water flows. It will provide opportunities for the local horticultural industry to expand and penetrate export markets. I am pleased to tell honourable members that there have been some early successes in far-north Queensland in terms of breaching the walls, as it were, to the horticultural markets of Asia. The markets are eager for more product from Australian markets. Our particular difficulty in far-north Queensland is that we are not able to supply reliably orders of the size that the Asian markets have requested. So I have no doubt that the Burnett region could itself join in this very lucrative opportunity as an export market. The development will enable urban and industrial usage within Bundaberg, and it will enhance the sugar industry in the Burnett region by integrating the sugar industry with new and existing industries in a way that will create synergies in terms of biomass and energy utilisation. This will all add value to the region.

I knew little about the Burnett region until I became the member for Cairns. Being a country member, as other members in this House will understand, it is common on the Monday night of a sitting week for country members to gather in the dining room not only for dinner but also for some company. The member for Bundaberg and I therefore got to know each other quite well in those years following our election in 1998 to seats in this honourable parliament, and it was through those dinner discussions that I learnt about the water problems that have plagued that region of the state for many years and have held back development and held back opportunities and possibilities for business and for jobs. It

is very clear to me, after coming to know the member for Bundaberg, how long and hard she and others in the region have worked to see this legislation come before the parliament today—legislation that will provide some real hope for a much more prosperous future for people in the Burnett region.

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