



Speech by

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON**

**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

---

Hansard 4 April 2001

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Murray-Darling Basin**

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (10.11 a.m.), by leave: I would like to inform the House of a significant step forward in Queensland's management of salinity in its part of the Murray-Darling Basin. At the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting in Sydney on Friday, Queensland committed, for the first time, to participate in the Basin Salinity Management Strategy.

In implementing this strategy, Queensland will identify its end of valley salinity targets—a task to be undertaken over the next three years in consultation with the catchment community and with the further development of our scientific knowledge.

Queensland's salinity research is recognised as leading edge science which will greatly assist the community in identifying salinity risks and preventive action. I am confident that this proactive approach will prevent the degradation of Queensland's land and waterways and avoid the major problems now evident elsewhere in Australia.

Queensland currently contributes only a small level of salt to the basin river system and this will continue over the next 50 years under the Salinity Management Strategy. Accordingly, Queensland's participation in the Basin Salinity Management Strategy will focus on addressing the salinity risks through direct action within the Queensland catchments.

If an audit in five years shows that these actions have been insufficient to ensure that Queensland's end of valley salinity targets are being met, then Queensland will join the basin's salinity credit scheme. Queensland's commitment to the Basin Salinity Management Strategy is an example of our support for the basin's Integrated Catchment Management Policy that was endorsed at Friday's ministerial council meeting. It outlines an approach to integrated catchment management that is based on targets for catchment health and progressive evolution of the way communities, institutions and governments work to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Queensland also recently signed an intergovernmental agreement with the Commonwealth to commit \$162 million of joint state-Commonwealth funds to the implementation of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality over the next seven years. In fact, Queensland was the first state in Australia to sign up to this strategy. My department has already been out in the community via a series of salinity workshops informing land-holders and other stakeholders of the threat that rising salt levels poses to the long term health of our land and water resources.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that Queensland takes its commitment to address water quality and salinity issues very seriously. The government's commitment to the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality and to the Murray-Darling Basin Salinity Management Strategy will have multiple environmental and economic benefits—both within Queensland and further downstream in the other Murray-Darling states.

---