



Speech by

TREVOR STRONG

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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WATER RESOURCES

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (6.18 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the minister and hope to explain a few things to my fellow members. Honourable members would be aware that when the water planning process first commenced under the Beattie government it was a new approach to water allocation and management. Our approach has been one of ongoing improvement on the basis of lessons learnt during the development of each water resource plan and on the basis of new technology and science that arises out of a range of research projects that government departments and related organisations are involved in.

Whilst there will always be a need for improvement in various aspects of the process, science and technology, the current framework is still acknowledged as one of the best in Australia. A number of initiatives are being undertaken by the government to improve both the planning process and the way in which existing and future plans will be implemented under the Water Act 2000. Public consultation has always been the cornerstone of this government's approach to the water reform process. Draft water resource plans are already subject to scrutiny and input by regional community reference panels that are representative of a wide range of local stakeholders.

These panels provide a forum for two-way communication on issues, analysis and approaches to managing a basin's water resources. The government is constantly reviewing ways to improve public consultation processes to give stakeholders their say about decisions affecting the delivery of water to their communities and industries. For example, only yesterday the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines introduced amendments to the Water Act 2000 to establish a reference panel to consider exceptional circumstances preventing waterworks from being completed in time for moratorium deadlines in the Murray-Darling and Fitzroy basins.

Mr Seeney: Tell us about the Paradise dam. I want to know when it is going to be built.

Mr STRONG: The Paradise dam hopefully will be completed in due time with the help of the federal parliament.

This panel will give water users a right of appeal to complete works under construction at the time a moratorium is introduced. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines is also currently putting in place arrangements to establish a reference group comprising peak stakeholder and government representation to provide input to water reform implementation issues.

In order to improve the scientific basis for specifying ecological outcomes and monitoring requirements in our resource operation plants, the department is undertaking a range of research initiatives in various parts of the state. Research studies include projects in the Fitzroy and Condamine-Balonne river basins to provide cost-effective and practical indicators of stream health as affected by flow changes and land use changes, biological monitoring research to establish a monitoring framework for south-east Queensland rivers and a project to establish a monitoring framework for flows, water quality and river condition in the Murray-Darling river system. These projects will provide the framework for implementing new monitoring systems in the respective project catchments and future plan areas. In addition, the department spends some \$1.3 million per annum on collection and analysis of ambient water quality, sediment and biological monitoring systems. These are just a few of the improvements being made to the water reform process by the Beattie government. As I said at the outset, this

government constantly reviews its water reform processes with a view to making ongoing improvements to the process in consultation with stakeholders.

Water is our most scarce and precious natural resource, and as a community we need to get value out of every drop. The framework for achieving our water reform goals and desired environmental outcomes is contained in the Water Act 2000, which gives Queensland the necessary legislative framework to deliver the bulk of our COAG water reform obligations while continuing to manage our precious water resource in a sustainable manner. I believe that the government should be commended for its commitment to water reform.
