



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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WALLA WEIR; E. H. CHURCHWARD WEIR

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (7.04 p.m.): Yesterday, I had the pleasure of playing a small role in SunWater's naming ceremony of the Walla Weir and also with that was a declaration of a significant site for the Taribelang people of the Walla crossing. Of course, the Minister for Local Government and member for Bundaberg was there and Steve Robertson, the Minister for Natural Resources, was there also and played a role.

Many people were there. They were bussed out from Bundaberg. I would say about 50 people watched the ceremony. They included people who go back a long way in the sugar industry in the area. There were people such as John Francis, Reno Bongioletti and Mr Townsend, the former chairman of the Gooburrum shire. These people have been involved in the sugar industry as well as the water infrastructure groups that have developed over the years. They all played a role in some way, shape or form—whether it was years ago or recently—to achieve what we saw yesterday.

Jason Browne is the tribal elder, but he is more inclined to call himself a family elder of the Taribelang people. He gave a small talk on what Walla means to these people. Apparently Walla means a crossing of the river. They used that site where the weir is located for when they were walking, when they made trips to the Bunya Mountains for a festival or when they made other trips to Mon Repos for the turtle festival that they held some time ago. It is quite a special spot for them. So young Jason was very emotive about the naming of the Walla Weir after that area.

Mr Churchward is an icon in the sugar industry. He is a man of vision and he has had a long history in the sugar industry. He is chairman of his local canegrowers. He has been involved in anything to do with the sugar industry and he has led the industry. He is an inspiration to all of us newer members of parliament, especially me, because he keeps himself terrifically informed about the issues relating to the sugar industry. I could not think of anyone more appropriate than he is to have a weir named after him.

The Walla Weir is one of our greatest producing infrastructures in the Burnett. It was a terrific day.
