



Speech by

**DON LIVINGSTONE**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST**

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Hansard 15 October 2003

#### **WATER SUPPLY**

**Mr LIVINGSTONE** (Ipswich West—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment moved by the minister. I know from dealing with the member for Lockyer over a period that he is quite genuine in his concerns about water in our region. However, the hypocrisy of the coalition amazes me. We see that hypocrisy when we look at some of the comments its members have made.

My electorate of Ipswich West takes in a part of the lower Lockyer. I would be probably the first Labor member since Federation to represent that area. Coalition members have the hide to run around the place talking about what the Beattie government is not doing in relation to water. They have represented the area for the past 100 years, and what have they done in relation to water? They have done very little. Most probably they have done nothing in relation to water. The member for Darling Downs has proposed this sneaky Hopper tax. That is the only way to describe it. That would mean 643,140 Brisbane dwelling owners being slugged with a \$30 sneaky tax. It is unbelievable.

Water is an issue I have been heavily involved with in my electorate. Water is a very complex matter. Not always do farmers want recycled water. A variety of other options can be looked at and should be looked at. In the area of the lower Lockyer that I represent there are three dams particularly used by the irrigators. None of these dams is in my electorate, but Atkinsons Dam is right next door to it. Atkinsons Dam holds 30,000 megalitres, Bill Gunn Dam holds 25,000 megalitres and Clarendon Dam holds approximately 18,000 megalitres. These dams also play a very important role in feeding the aquifer. There are two main watertables through that area. One is down to 50 per cent of its capacity and falling. The other one is 100 per cent full and salty. The salt water is now running down into the one that is down to 50 per cent of its capacity. I do not need to tell members that we have real dramas in relation to salt and that something needs to be done about it.

One of the things this government has done is organise to have the inlets into Atkinsons Dam widened. The contract on that has already been let and I must say that it has taken a fair while. The government has put in \$672,000 and the irrigators have put in \$120,000. That means that \$792,000 is being spent there now. Those inlets will be completed very shortly. That is just one area in which we will make a difference in relation to water.

The other area relates to the Brisbane River irrigators. I would like to read a letter I received from these other irrigators which just shows the involvement we have had and the great role played by the minister. I had farmers come to me because they had real concerns in relation to the allocation of water they had in their area. I went to the area with one of my staff. We marched all over the properties and were taken around in vehicles to look at their concerns. I then contacted the minister. The letter written to us states—

On behalf of the Brisbane River Irrigators I would like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for taking the time out of your busy schedule to come and meet with us ...

As you can appreciate our livelihoods depend greatly on the surety of our water supply. Without this we are unable to enter into supply contracts and plan future cropping programs. The Minister, Hon. Stephen Robertson, has addressed all of our concerns and given us a short term guarantee of our respective quotas.

I will not read the rest of the letter; it is self-explanatory. The minister has given them that short-term commitment and now we have a plan. It is all well and good to look at all of these other harebrained schemes.

The member for Darling Downs said that the recycled water proposal was viable. It does not stack up. We would like it to stack up. I would love it to stack up. Independent evaluations have been done. It has been looked at by a variety of groups, from City to Soil to Vision 2000 and government. There were independent people looking at the proposal. It simply did not stack up financially or environmentally. There were real concerns in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. It was believed that the damage done would outweigh the benefits received. That does not mean for one minute that this government is not committed in some way to overcoming those problems and trying to come to terms with the water issue.

Time expired.