



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (7.21 p.m.): Like the Families Department and the Justice Department, the Department of Natural Resources shows all the signs of becoming increasingly dysfunctional. A self-assessment and organisation benchmarking report for the south-west region of the department, which I table, confirms other signs that the department is underfunded, understaffed and underperforming. This report, which assesses staff satisfaction and organisation performance, reveals that the south-west region scored a woeful 382 out of a possible 1,000. The report highlights how poor this score is when it states—

Organisations would typically achieve scores over the 700 mark.

The biggest issue raised in this report by departmental officers themselves is the chronic lack of funding resulting in high staff turnover and plummeting staff morale. Chronic underfunding for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines is an issue that has been apparent in successive Beattie government budgets. This report makes it apparent that this department has been critically underfunded to the point where, like the departments of Families and Justice, its capacity to perform its key roles has almost been lost. That is confirmed by the level of staff dissatisfaction in the south-west region expressed in this report.

The region is made up of about 260 staff in areas such as Toowoomba, Warwick, Dalby, Charleville, Roma, Goondiwindi and St George. Some of the many quotes from department officers that are included in the report help to tell the sad truth. A senior officer said—

Across the region, staff feel that the current cultural doesn't create an environment for continuous improvement mainly due to the lack of funding and resources.

Another officer said—

Staff turnover is mitigating against sustained performance improvement.

Yet another officer said—

Low cost improvements are resourced at the expense of those equally worthy and more important but more costly improvements.

These words from departmental staff confirm the Beattie government's lack of funding of the Department of Natural Resources that I have spoken about for years. This is the department that is responsible for those critical areas of mines, land, water and vegetation. If those areas are to be administered properly then the Beattie government must ensure that this department is resourced properly.

This report should put an end to the minister's continual denial that the department has been gutted by his chronic underfunding. It confirms that the Beattie government has no real commitment to the responsible management of our natural resources, it confirms that the minister's rhetoric has no substance and it confirms that what I have been saying about the need to fund this department properly is a valid argument and needs to be addressed by the minister and by this government.