

Speech by

# Hon. K. LINGARD

## MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard 20 April 2004

### MOOGERAH DAM

**Hon. K. R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.11 p.m.): At a meeting of the Warrill Valley Irrigation Area on Wednesday night, 31 March, which was hosted and chaired by both Mr Ian Rickuss, the member for Lockyer, and me, the following motion was moved and passed unanimously—

That this meeting of the water users of the Warrill Valley irrigation area requests the State Government to recognise its social responsibilities and community service obligations and make water supply from Wivenhoe Dam available to Swanbank at the same price per megalitre as it is from Moogerah Dam so that limited capacity of Moogerah Dam may be best utilised in serving the immediate needs of the urban and rural users reliant on this source of water for their livelihood. Unlike Swanbank, which has pipeline access to Wivenhoe Dam, the Warrill Valley Irrigation area has no alternative water supply to Moogerah Dam.

The history of the Moogerah Dam is that it was built in the 1960s. Most people believed that it was built for agricultural viability. Whenever such dams are built, we have to accept that people on the river who have riparian rights are concerned that, in the future, their rights will be resumed. Most people believe that when a dam such as the Moogerah Dam is built and with such a storage capacity, those people would have a massive storage of water that they could use for irrigation in the future. Moogerah Dam also supplied water to Boonah and Ipswich, which not many people realise. When the Swanbank Power Station was built, water was made available for Swanbank. Swanbank built its own dam. Of course, Swanbank pays a massive amount of money for its water—probably over $1.1 million—which is very necessary, especially now when we come to the stage that all water must be paid for. That is a relevant point, because if it is that Swanbank is to seek water from the Wivenhoe Dam, quite obviously someone must increase the cost to those people who are on the Moogerah Dam system. That is the difficulty.

The other big difficulty is that it seems as though the catchment area for the Moogerah Dam is not as good as it was thought that it possibly would be. Even now, with the amount of rain that we have received, Moogerah Dam is only at 10 per cent capacity, or probably just a little bit lower. So, of course, with a poor catchment area and in times of drought, people who rely on this water for irrigation come to the fact that SunWater, which is making the decisions on the water allocation, will say to the irrigation users, 'No, you can't use the water. We need this water for Swanbank, we need the water for Boonah and we need the water for Ipswich.'

Similarly, in relation to the Maroon Dam in the Beaudesert area, the people who are first denied the use of that water storage are the farmers. Of course, in good times when water is available, farmers make their own decisions about what crops will be viable. During dry times, the first people to lose access to water are the farmers. Of course, they are the ones who have extreme concerns.

The people's other concern is the cost of maintenance. When Moogerah Dam went down to two per cent capacity recently—and all pumping of water has been banned since last year—it was heartless of SunWater to raise the cost of the water, yet farmers were faced with an increase of 50 per cent on their maintenance cost—from $8.22 to $12.24 per megalitre of allocation. Naturally, these people were saying, 'We have not had water for 18 months. You are now increasing our maintenance costs, yet we are receiving no water.' But, of course, the main thing was that Swanbank, which has the ability to go to the Wivenhoe Dam for water, was kept on the Moogerah Dam system. It was switched over for a short time when the Moogerah Dam was down to two per cent capacity, but now that the Moogerah Dam is down to 10 per cent capacity the decision has been made to switch Swanbank's ability to access water back to the Moogerah Dam.

These people are saying to the government that surely the government has a social responsibility for this. If it was over the last 12 months that $16 million was made by SunWater on the sale of water, surely at a bad time the government has a social responsibility for it to commit some finance so that Swanbank can go back to the Wivenhoe Dam for water so that the Moogerah Dam water can be made available as storage water for irrigators and for people who live in places such as Boonah and Ipswich.

A secondary worry is the use of the Moogerah Dam by skiers. If the capacity of the Moogerah Dam falls below 10 per cent, then those people cannot use the water. So at this special meeting of the water users of the Warrill Valley irrigation area, chaired by Mr Rickuss and me, they have asked that the government recognise that it has a special social responsibility and a social commitment to assist Swanbank to access water from the Wivenhoe Dam.

Time expired.