



Speech by

**Liz Cunningham**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

Hansard Thursday, 10 August 2006

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL (ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G)**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.54 pm): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G. I would like to refer in particular to a couple of very important matters, the first one being water. Nothing will exist without an adequate and reliable supply of water. Throughout the state we see irrigators, who are very responsible in their use of this commodity, having to pay for water licences but not receiving their allocation. I am sure it is particularly galling for them, when they have a restricted ability to create income, to have to continue to pay this charge.

In Gladstone and Calliope a problem raised its head just days before the two councils that service those areas brought down their budgets. Historically, Gladstone City Council and Calliope shire had a price equalisation agreement for water out of the Awoonga Dam. That is treated water for the two urban communities as well as for industry that takes treated or potable water. The agreement was perhaps less formal than others, but it was certainly in existence and referred to over a long period. A cost equalisation is borne by all residents. But, as I said, decisions about augmentation and the development of water infrastructure have had factored into them that price equalisation agreement. When the Gladstone City Council handed down its budget, it announced that it would be withdrawing from that agreement and that the Calliope Shire Council would have to pay the full price for the water that travels from Awoonga Dam into Gladstone and then back out to Calliope.

I know that the Calliope Shire Council will be looking to the Queensland government for a water subsidy. The council is proposing to build its treatment plant at Benaraby. Currently, the water travels over 43 kilometres from the dam to Calliope. But, in light of that historical agreement, which coloured where infrastructure was developed and augmented, the treatment plant will be only 13 kilometres to Boyne Tannum and 14 kilometres to Calliope.

The Calliope Shire Council will be looking to the government to provide a substantial subsidy. Meetings between departmental officers and Treasury have been held in order to provide water at an affordable price to both communities so that equity is not only done but is seen to be done. I will certainly be adding my voice to that of those two councils to ensure that the communities can receive this very important commodity at an affordable price to them. I believe they are a very responsible group of people owing to the water restrictions that occurred before Cyclone Benny. They reduced their water use and have kept their water use down to the point at which the Gladstone Area Water Board has suffered some loss of income. People have handled the restrictions and availability of water that well.

Additionally, with the proposed Calliope water treatment plant there will be some redundant infrastructure that will be the responsibility of the Gladstone Area Water Board. To an extent, they have stood back from the whole debate between the Gladstone City Council and the Calliope Shire Council. Instead they have been decision takers rather than contributors and decision makers.

In relation to water for the south-east corner, I have to place on the record that in 2002-03 a constituent of mine, Mr Brian Ross, put a proposal to the minister for state development at the time to pipe

water from the Burdekin River scheme down to here. I am not sure how much consideration was given to that proposal, but certainly it would have been an answer to some of the problems that are being faced today, particularly with the surfeit of water that is occurring up at the Burdekin at the moment with the very generous rain—perhaps overly generous rain—that it has received in comparison to the rest of the state.

Fisheries is a very important area of concern to my community. We have an extraordinarily high number of boat registrations per capita. We also have a very important commercial fishing industry that works out of Gladstone. I think we have the best quality seafood in Queensland. That might be debated by others, but I believe I am right. Fisheries certainly need consideration in terms of not only the constraints that are required for sustainability but also their ability to service their financial obligations, which are extreme, and their ability to provide an income for their families. The fishing industry has faced significant constraints, closures and obligations placed on it over the last few years. It is time that everything stopped and that the effect of those changes is measured.