



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 30 November 2006

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Recycled Water

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 am): We are currently experiencing the worst drought on record and our water supplies are under threat. Our government is helping fight this threat through the provision of new infrastructure, examining new sources of supply and encouraging greater conservation and education across business, industry and the community. We are getting on with the job of building a statewide water grid.

However, the reality is that the prospects for rain are not good and we must continue to look at all options for future water supply—all options. One option is recycled water for residential use—not as part of our drought response but as part of our ongoing water supply. I have no qualms about drinking recycled water and I believe through education and public awareness our community is becoming much more accepting. It is used all around the world. Recently I was in Singapore and I drank it then, and I am quite happy to drink it again. It is a clean, safe and viable option.

However, I want to hear what members of the public think. That is why I am pleased to announce that south-east Queenslanders will get their chance to have a say on 17 March next year. The Deputy Premier will shortly introduce the South-East Queensland Water Recycling Plebiscite Bill 2006 which will set the wheels in motion for a regional vote in 2007. This will give people in the council areas that draw from the main water supplies of the Wivenhoe system a say on recycled water.

The beauty of our new Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme is that if south-east Queenslanders support the use of recycled water it can be done at minimal extra cost. The pipeline is being built with additional capacity above and beyond that which will be required by the power stations and other industrial users. In this way, if the need arises, we will be able to more closely examine pumping this water into the Lockyer, Warrill and Bremer valleys to improve rural water supply as well as pumping the treated water into the catchment area in the Wivenhoe Dam for residential use.

However, this will not happen without the support of south-east Queenslanders. The special legislation is required because this is not a statewide vote but one that will assess what Queenslanders in this region think about their region's water resources. Now that we have a date to work to, the next steps are for the government, relevant departments and experts to conduct the research and develop the plebiscite question which will go to parliament in the first sitting of the next year. The legislation will also authorise the Electoral Commission to prepare the rolls and inform the community about voting details and deadlines.

The bill will entrust the information role to the Queensland Water Commission. It will provide information about the plebiscite question, indirect potable reuse and other relevant issues. This will include material in support of and against the proposition because I do not want this vital issue to be politicised. It is far too important to the future of our region and the people of the south-east corner of Queensland.

The plebiscite will cover the following council areas: Beaudesert, Boonah, Brisbane, Caboolture, Caloundra, Cooloola, Esk, Gatton, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Kilcoy, Laidley, Logan, Maroochy, Noosa, Pine Rivers, Redcliffe, Redland, and Toowoomba. It will give residents of the south-east corner an opportunity to have their say on the future of recycled water.