



Speech by

## Hon. Andrew Fraser

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Wednesday, 6 June 2007

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### WATER ASSETS

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (5.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendment moved by the Premier and seconded by the Deputy Premier. I would like to commence my contribution by visiting the economic Neverland in which the member for Maroochydhore resides and to be really clear with her at the outset. I apologise if my answer to the question at the lunch to which she referred contained some detail of some length. I will try to cut that back to a pretty simple statement right here for the benefit of the member for Maroochydhore—and indeed the other members of the economic Neverland sitting opposite. I will go particularly to what the Deputy Premier said in this parliament, which is in *Hansard*—

All assets will continue to be owned by government. The Queensland Water Commission report does not recommend, nor is the government considering, any privatisation of any part of the water asset system.

Indeed, that is true. So for the benefit of the members opposite, who seem to be residing in the cheap seats where this notion of their own invention of what might be under consideration is prosecuted by them to serve their own purposes, I want to assure them that the government has a clear position in this regard, and that is the position that I put at the lunch to which the member for Maroochydhore referred. I know it was a fairly stunning venue with quite a view so I am sure that maybe the member's attention diverted for part of that time out to the water at Mooloolaba, but I just think it is important to clarify that matter at the start.

What is also important to clarify at the start is that, far from this being a case of any potential sell-off, this government has for a long time—and continues to do so—invested considerable amounts of taxpayers' money in the water and sewerage systems of south-east Queensland. This government has invested particularly in the south-east corner water grid, but, more importantly, it has been investing across the state with local governments—40 per cent subsidies under the water and sewerage program over the life of this government and that is a fact that has been detailed here many times before. Indeed, in the south-east corner, which we are talking about tonight, as has previously been detailed the government has invested in 207 projects to a value of some \$279 million. This issue is not about an invented sell-off that is in the minds of the members of the opposition; this issue is about the investment that the government has made.

More to the point, the Deputy Premier referred to her challenge in trying to work out how she could go from being a socialist to an economic rationalist in 12 hours. It is akin to the way in which we try to run a commonality in the thread of argument that is often prosecuted by those members opposite. Of course, when they were in government they sold off the silver to fund the bottom line which, of course, breaks the first rule of any decent government that is interested in operating proper and fiscal management in the state. The members opposite sold the antique table to pay for the groceries. Then they come in here and talk about the asset sales and the adjustments to the state's balance sheet that this government makes. But the point is that at each point when this state government has made a decision to reap the benefit of a previous investment in one asset, the money that is gained gets reinvested into the productive worth of the state

If the members opposite have a point in this regard, they need to point to the time during the term of this government that the state's net worth has decreased, because at each point in time the state's net worth has gone up. That suggests that the decisions that the government has made about any adjustments to its asset balance sheet are, in fact, to the benefit of the overall net worth of the state. But these guys reside in the sort of Neverland which has the federal Liberal Party over here, the state Liberal Party over there and the National Party down there. Depending on which day of the week it is and the issue, the members opposite argue a different case in point. Trying to understand where these people are coming from when it comes to an economic policy is, in fact, the great challenge of all of us in this parliament.

I think it speaks volumes in the community that people are alive to the fact that the sort of points the members opposite make are always reactionary, based on what the media says that day. This is an opposition that likes to talk a lot about media management. It is media reactionary. The opposition's position only ever gets invented by what it sees as being the issue of the day and the convenient point to take. The members opposite have absolutely no commitment to any coherent economic policy—no commitment to any policy whatsoever. They make it up as they go along. In this regard, they are firmly making it up as they go along.

As I said, this government has invested \$279 million in the water assets of the south-east corner. We do not have any intention of selling them off. We have every intention of continuing that investment—ramping up that investment and stepping in to make sure that south-east Queenslanders have access to a water supply.