



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Tuesday, 21 August 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Water Grid

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure) (10.03 am): While the rain yesterday was fantastic to see, we all have to be careful not to lose focus, particularly here in the south-east corner where we are still battling our worst drought on record. I am pleased to report that the construction of the \$9 billion water grid continues at a pace which exceeds initial forecasts. But at the same time it is prudent risk management practice to secure contingency supplies. We must plan for the worst-case scenario, the so-called Armageddon scenario in the extreme and unlikely event that some unforeseen or catastrophic event delays either of our drought prevention projects.

Investigations into a range of emergency back-up supplies that could deliver massive amounts of drinking water are being fast-tracked by the Beattie government. On 30 June, the state government invited private firms to submit proposals for climate-independent water supply solutions. By 27 July, 12 proponents had submitted 28 separate proposals for contingent water supplies. Respected firms such as GE Water, Theiss, Worley Parsons and Sumitomo are among firms to submit solutions which could provide up to 150 megalitres of water a day on a temporary basis. To put that in perspective, south-east Queensland has been using about 550 megalitres a day under level 5 restrictions.

We are investigating plans to anchor large-scale barges along the Brisbane River to pump desalinated water directly into the system. Other schemes involve having water delivered by super tankers or possibly towing membranes of water. The projects will be short-listed by the end of the month so that we can have back-up supplies ready when and if they are needed. As well as emergency plans, this government is also fast-tracking investigations into expanding the Tugun desalination plant by up to an additional 47 megalitres a day. We are also investigating proposals to supplement flows into the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project by up to an additional 40 megalitres a day involving the transfer of water from catchments not currently part of the scheme. Combined with the government's water grid projects, these initiatives will provide the water that south-east Queensland needs. We will do whatever it takes. We are determined that the south-east corner of Queensland will not run out of water during this drought.