



Speech by
Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Tuesday, 20 February 2007

WATER SUPPLY

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 am): This morning in the parliament we saw some bizarre performances by both the Premier and the Minister for Natural Resources and Water as they continue to try to divert attention away from the looming disasters that are about to engulf their government. I think there is an opportunity now to put a few things on the record. If the Premier is at all serious about protecting the water allocations of Queensland farmers, the first thing he should do is to recant the statements that he has made about Cubbie Station. We all remember when he came in here with his proposal to close down Cubbie Station, to compulsorily resume it and to do away with that irrigation industry in south-east Queensland. It appears that he has had another road to Damascus type conversion. What we need from the Premier is less stupidity and more seriousness about the Queensland irrigators' allocations. Get real and get serious and support—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! Leader of the Opposition, I ask you to be careful of your language.

Mr SEENEY: What we need from the Premier are some real commitments to some real proposals that protect Queensland water users and their allocations.

The other bizarre contribution we heard this morning was from the Minister for Natural Resources and Water, who seemed to think that it was his job to stand up for the people of north Queensland by sending all of their water to Adelaide. Somehow that was going to be of benefit to the people of Queensland. As I said earlier in this House, for 20 years there has been one constant and that is that we have advocated the construction of water infrastructure right across Queensland, but particularly in north Queensland. If any member of this House wanted to do anything for the people of north Queensland they would join with us in advocating the construction of some of those water projects in north Queensland for the benefit of the people of north Queensland. To do that, the water needs to be used in north Queensland. If honourable members look at what has been proposed under the terms of the Bradfield Scheme over the years, they will see that it has been about using the water in north Queensland. It has been about providing irrigation for that area of land between Hughenden and Richmond and ensuring that there is economic development in that part of north Queensland that benefits north Queensland in its entirety.

What the Premier and the Minister for Natural Resources and Water were talking about this morning is not the Bradfield Scheme; it is the Beattie scheme. It is about somehow taking that water and running it all the way down the western river systems to Adelaide. It is absolutely impossible. There is no amount of money that would make it possible. Look at the facts. The natural floods in those river systems contain hundreds of billions of litres of water—huge amounts of water—but those natural floods very seldom make it all the way down the river systems. They are dissipated in the channel country, in that network of channels that has become world famous as a cattle fattening area. Those huge flows are dissipated in those areas. If we take that million litres of water a year that is available theoretically from the Bradfield Scheme and even if we get it to the top of the Warrego River, which is 700 or 800 kilometres away, and release that water into that river system, it is not even going to reach Longreach. It is not going to get a fraction of the way down the river because those mighty floods that are a characteristic of those river systems very seldom make it down those river systems. We face a huge logistical challenge to get it from

the Thomson River, which flows into Lake Eyre, and then from there across to the Warrego River, which is the headwaters of the Murray-Darling. To suggest that putting that relatively small amount of money at the top of the Murray-Darling system is going to have any effect anywhere is absolute lunacy.

I say to the member for Maryborough that that is not to say that the Bradfield Scheme does not deserve some credibility and some examination. But the Bradfield Scheme is not what is being talked about in this parliament. The Bradfield Scheme is not what is being proposed. What is being talked about is the Beattie scheme. The Beattie scheme is not about diverting water; it is about diverting attention. It is about playing politics. It is about selling out the people of north Queensland, not supporting them in any way. If the minister for water were at all serious about protecting the people of north Queensland he would be supporting us in having a realistic look at the original Bradfield Scheme and all the other water infrastructure projects in north Queensland. If the Premier were at all serious about getting water for the people of Adelaide, he would put it in a bottle and take it down there in the government jet because that is the only way he is going to get it there. He is not going to run it down the western river systems and expect it to reach the people of Adelaide and the lower ends of the Murray-Darling.

What we have seen is a classic political play. It is a case of do anything to create a political diversion. It is about protecting the government from the revelations that we all look forward to and that we know are coming. No distraction will take away the attention that those revelations deserve when they eventually surface.