



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard Wednesday, 17 October 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Water Restrictions, Level 6

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (9.48 am): Consultation on the draft package of level 6 water restrictions released by the Queensland Water Commission at the end of last month has now closed. Unlike level 5 restrictions which focused primarily on residential compliance, draft level 6 restrictions focus on achieving greater business sector compliance with water restrictions. The Queensland Water Commission received only 27 formal responses to the proposed level 6 water restrictions. Those 27 responses came from seven councils, one from the south-east Queensland Council of Mayors, six private businesses, two water efficiency assessors, five industry associations, three government agencies and three private citizens.

In comparison, when draft level 5 restrictions were announced the commission received 860 formal submissions. It is clear that the people of south-east Queensland understand that we are in the worst drought on record and have embraced water-saving measures accordingly. Prior to the introduction of restrictions in May 2005, south-east Queensland used more than 900 megalitres of water a day. The average daily use across the south-east last week was 546 megalitres. That result is even more impressive when we realise that over that time south-east Queensland's population increased by more than 130,000 people to 2.7 million.

Although water restrictions will never be popular, the community understands that during a time like this they are necessary to ensure continued water security. I am pleased to tell the House that the commission advises that formal feedback on the new restrictions has in general been positive. Businesses, industry and government have all expressed support. Most have said that they are pleased to see the commission focused on the clarification and compliance programs around existing restrictions.

I am advised that councils have indicated that they agree with the principles behind level 6 restrictions and say that they are happy to see such things as deadlines for the implementation of WEMP projects. The concerns they raise go to the detail of the implementation of some individual elements and the proposed timing of their introduction.

Councils are clear in their view that households using excessive amounts of water should be reined in. They agree that there should be a consistent program across the region to do this and the QWC's proposals are designed to ensure consistency. Councils have, however, made suggestions around the implementation process and its timing and these are currently being considered. Industry representatives have told the commission that they are supportive of a benchmark for required water savings based on achieving best practice, or 25 per cent. QWC advises that business groups such as AIG and Commerce Queensland have also indicated that they are generally comfortable with the proposed restrictions while seeking clarification of some details. QWC advises that residents have expressed little concern about the draft level 6 restrictions, including the proposed residential excessive water users compliance program.

The commission is taking all feedback seriously. The commission will now fully consider all submissions received as it finalises the level 6 water restriction package with a view to introducing level 6 restrictions from mid-November.