



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Water Infrastructure

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.32 am): I congratulate the Clerk, Neil Laurie, on his 40th birthday, on behalf of the government. Neil, I could not think of a better group of people than us to share your birthday with. It is actually on the *Hansard* record. How many of us got that?

Today I can announce that a scoping study for the state water grid, also known as the Burdekin to Brisbane pipeline, has begun. Engineering consultants GHD Pty Ltd have been appointed to prepare the concept plan. The plan will investigate whether a pipeline linking key water infrastructure over the 1,200 kilometres between the Burdekin and south-east Queensland is feasible and what other centres would potentially benefit by linking the region. As members of the house will be aware, this year there has been extensive flooding of north Queensland rivers while south-east Queensland continues to be gripped by drought, no doubt in part due to climate change.

Let me be clear: the construction of such a pipeline would be an engineering and economic challenge, but we owe it to future generations to test the science and the technology in case the pipeline may prove viable in the future. Although it may not be feasible to pipe water from the state's north to the south-east in 2007, population growth and climate change may make it necessary in coming decades.

The concept plan will examine: options for providing long-term emergency water supply for communities and industries from the Burdekin to south-east Queensland; the long-term availability of water from the Burdekin; the critical water needs of future south-east Queensland communities during worst-case drought; cost estimates for piping water over the long distance involved; the most obvious route for the pipeline; the size of the pipeline and pumping stations and power supply needed; and preliminary environmental, social and cultural assessments.

The concept plan is expected to be completed later this year and will cost \$350,000. GHD will also need to consider whether the pipeline should be able to move water in both directions so the state's north could also receive water if it was in drought and there was a surplus in the south. With changes in climate, we are not quite sure what future weather patterns will do, so we need to look at the long term.

The needs of the current and future populations of the Burdekin Basin, including Townsville and Thuringowa, will be a vital consideration. The heart of the state water grid will be the regional water supply strategies currently being developed by my government. Water infrastructure developed as part of the regional strategies will form the building blocks of the grid, which will provide the necessary storages and pipeline links between them.

Under the plan, the main water source for the state water grid would be Queensland's largest dam, the Burdekin Falls Dam. The Burdekin Falls Dam has an annual inflow of more than five million megalitres and it has sufficient unallocated water to supply other regions without jeopardising the water security of the Burdekin region.