



Speech by

Ray Hopper

MEMBER FOR DARLING DOWNS

Hansard Thursday, 22 February 2007

MOTION: WATER

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (12.06 pm): The Beattie Labor government is renowned for spin over substance, for words rather than actions and for paper, not concrete. Nowhere is this more evident than in the crucial area of water infrastructure. Make no mistake, the main reason that south-east Queensland is in the grip of a water crisis now is the Beattie Labor government's failure to invest in new water supply sources over the past eight years. Similarly, in other parts of the state, such as central and northern Queensland, we are not making the most of our water resources because the Beattie Labor government has refused to build the infrastructure Queensland needs to underpin our rapid population growth and economic development.

The contrast between the Beattie Labor government's record and the record of the Queensland coalition team on water infrastructure could not be more stark. Virtually every single major dam in Queensland has been built by National or coalition governments. The Fairbairn, Wivenhoe, Burdekin Falls, Fred Haigh and Boondooma dams, to name but a few, have all been built by the National or coalition governments. The only dam Labor can attempt to claim credit for is the Paradise Dam. The Borbidge government had actually given the go-ahead for that dam and then the Labor opposition was forced to match the coalition's commitment in a bid to retain the seat of Bundaberg in the 1998 election. That is the only reason it has built one dam.

It is also worth reflecting on the Borbidge coalition government's water infrastructure task force which developed a visionary, long-term plan for future water supply in Queensland. The task force evaluated and prioritised more than 380 new water projects throughout Queensland which led to the then coalition government committing to and starting work on the multibillion-dollar water development program. Unfortunately, this plan was dumped by the incoming Beattie Labor government, which has sat on its hands for eight years while Queensland's water supplies have dried up.

We recently saw the impact of the Beattie Labor government's neglect of water infrastructure in north and central Queensland when Queensland's largest dam, the Burdekin Falls Dam, continues to spill over after torrential downpours. Much of this water could have been stored in the dam if it had been raised.

Mr Wallace interjected.

Mr HOPPER: You should know yourself, Minister—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Minister and member for Darling Downs, keep your comments directed through the chair.

Mr HOPPER: The minister should know himself that at the height of these torrential downpours that dam was filling the equivalent of Sydney Harbour every five hours. That is the amount of water going over the Burdekin Falls Dam. Surprise, surprise, during the past eight years of the Beattie Labor government nothing has been done to advance any of these projects. This means that thousands of litres of water is not stored when we get torrential rain.

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order. The member for Darling Downs is deliberately misleading the House. We have committed studies—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): There is no point of order. Please resume your seat.

Mr HOPPER: In far-north Queensland, the Nullinga Dam was identified by the Borbidge coalition government as a high priority and yet, after eight years of Labor, nothing has happened. We are still getting plenty of—

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order. The member for Darling Downs is deliberately misleading the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I warn the minister about frivolous points of order.

Mr HOPPER: The minister is purposely wasting time, because he does not want the facts released about how he looks after north Queensland. Indeed, in response to a coalition question on notice asked late last year, the infrastructure minister was at pains to point out that the government had only committed to investigate the Nullinga Dam. She could not provide any construction cost estimates and revealed that over the next four years all they had planned to do on the Nullinga Dam were studies and preconstruction work.

It is clear that many of the water woes that Queensland is facing, while exacerbated by drought, are primarily due to the Beattie Labor government's neglect and inaction on what is surely one of the most basic areas of state government responsibility—that is, the provision of adequate water infrastructure. Unlike the do-nothing Labor government, the Queensland coalition will work as one team to build for the future and ensure that infrastructure is delivered throughout Queensland, ahead of time and not just when a crisis develops.

Last night I touched on the Wolffdene Dam site. I know a bit about that dam site. Kevin Rudd advised Goss to sell the Wolffdene Dam site and that is why, under this government, the people of Brisbane will be forced to drink recycled sewage. Kevin Rudd and this government's inaction have meant that the people of Brisbane are faced with drinking recycled sewage. If the Wolffdene Dam had been built, it would hold as much water as Wyvenhoe and we would not be faced with this situation. The Hinze Dam is now running over and the Wolffdene was to be in the same catchment area. If that infrastructure had been built, this would not have happened.

Time expired.