



Speech by

**Rosa Lee Long**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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## **TINAROO FALLS DAM**

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (10.10 pm): Whilst the south-east is struggling to cope with level 5 water restrictions and level 6 water restrictions are looming as a likely prospect, in the far-north orders have been given to open the taps on Tinaroo Falls Dam in my electorate and let nearly one billion litres of water out each day to simply run out to sea. This is because the Beattie government's own Barron River resource operations plan, which is the bible of water management for the Barron River below Tinaroo Falls Dam, says so. It is the regulatory arm of the Barron River water resource plan, which was approved in 2002 and would not usually be looked at again for 10 years. But it is already showing that it is badly flawed and needs to be reviewed far sooner than 2012. As has been demonstrated by the current drought in the south-east and also in the drought in far-north Queensland in 2002-03, there is never a guarantee of any future rainfall.

Water captured by dams should be preserved and released for very specific and productive purposes only. Yet these massive releases from Tinaroo Falls Dam are happening at the same time as the Beattie government is spending billions of dollars on desalination plants, diversionary pipelines, recycling facilities and so on. This is because for nearly 20 years ALP governments in Queensland have failed to keep up with the times and to keep up population increases in this state. They have repeatedly failed to understand that drought and flooding rain have always been part of nature and need to be planned for. No-one needs a university degree to understand that. In this dry state, water must be captured when it falls so that it is available during the dry times. That is only common sense.

Under the water management decisions of this government, Tinaroo Falls Dam is being drained at a phenomenal rate while the south-east is being told to preserve every drop. Earlier this month Brisbane's average daily consumption of water was just under 590 million litres a day, while Tinaroo Falls Dam continues to pour nearly double that amount out into the ocean simply because an inflexible piece of paper called an ROP demands it. Of course we need to ensure that our rivers do not run dry, but this massive artificial daily flood is so strong that it buries farmers' pumps and foot valves in sand and debris. This causes unnecessary expense to farmers who are then left to cover the costs themselves.

This water release is far in excess of anything needed to keep the Barron River running. Even the super-green Cairns and Far North Environment Centre has questioned it. Traditionally, Tinaroo Falls Dam is a reliable dam. But so, too, were the dams around Brisbane. There is no guarantee that Tinaroo Falls Dam will fill again next wet season and make up for these massive releases.

As I have said before, the ROP needs revisiting sooner rather than later. Surely the lessons of drought are clear: keep as much water in your dams as you can, because you never know when you might need it.