



Speech by

Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2007

MOTION: WATER ASSETS

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (6.01 pm): This government is taking action. In response to the worst drought on record, the Bligh government is undertaking the largest urban response in Australia—an investment of more than \$9 billion in our future and in the future of generations to come. The SEQ water grid will deliver an additional 350,000 megalitres of water each day by 2050. With regard to the short-term future, we are delivering desalination and water recycling that, when commissioned, will mean we will have the highest proportion of these types of water supplies of any Australian capital.

We are getting on with the job. As I was able to inform the Australian Pipeline Industry Association convention last week, we have already completed stage 1A of the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project, and purified recycled water is being delivered to Swanbank Power Station, reducing the draw from Wivenhoe by the equivalent of up to 140,000 residents a day. On stage 1B of the project we have already laid 64 kilometres of pipeline, which represents more than 65 per cent of the pipeline required, and will deliver even further savings to the drinking water used from Wivenhoe when it connects Tarong to the water grid in June 2008.

We will deliver even more water to Wivenhoe when water from the western corridor scheme reaches the dam in October 2008. We have laid more than 55 per cent of the southern regional water pipeline to connect the Gold Coast and surrounds to the water grid, and work is underway on the northern pipeline interconnector.

We have constructed almost 40 per cent of the Gold Coast desalination plant, and it remains on target to be completed by the end of November 2008 and producing 100 per cent of its water capacity by the end of January 2009. We are reforming the way water assets are managed across south-east Queensland. It is this reform that has sparked the latest scare campaign from some local mayors—and I am disappointed to say this—especially from my own city, Brisbane's Liberal Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman.

After I saw the full-page, ratepayer funded adverts in the *Courier-Mail*, in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* and in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* yesterday and again today, I went and had a look at what various local government representatives have said about this proposal in the past. It is worth looking at because it tells an interesting story. The Premier has already noticed that Lord Mayor Campbell Newman told the council chamber on 15 May, 'I am going to take the politics out of water.' Now he is putting it in like he might be putting fluoride into the water in your home town, Mr Speaker, but his additive is far more poisonous than that. On 17 May he told the *Courier-Mail*—

There would have been mayors before me who would have simply wanted to hang on to those, they would have felt that that was part of their empire. I'm not into empires. I'm into doing the right thing by the people who live in this city.

Well, the empire strikes back now. On 24 May he told ABC Radio—

Well overall I am totally in favour of this reform. It is very important. We have to sort out the fragmented water supply arrangements in south-east Queensland and I am right behind it.

A federal election kicks around and suddenly he is not right behind it. He is playing politics once again. In a letter on 8 August, as chairman of the South East Queensland Council of Mayors, Councillor Newman said—

In acknowledging the government's decision on council amalgamations SEQCOM position would be to reduce the number of (water) businesses from 17 to 10 in line with the new council boundaries. Such an approach will minimise the impact on staff, improve efficiency of operations, enhance transparency, and maintain the focus on service to the customer.

I could go on, and in fact I will because there is one more mayor that I want to mention. Yesterday Noosa mayor, Bob Abbot, told ABC Radio—

That sort of stuff's just knee-jerk reaction in a political environment and an absolute waste of energy and time. We have to stop the politics. I'm more than happy to just bury the hatchet, throw a bucket of water over myself and everyone else and say 'let's sit down and work out who are the real beneficiaries of this decision?' The ratepayers and the taxpayers of south-east Queensland have priority.

'Stop the politics' Councillor Abbot says. And I agree. The mayors started this political scaremongering. I urge them to show some responsibility, follow the state government's lead and get on with the job of delivering water security for south-east Queensland's homes and businesses. I urge the House to support water security, vote down the amendment and support the Premier's motion.