



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Wednesday, 7 October 2009

GLADSTONE REGIONAL COUNCIL, POTABLE WATER

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—LNP) (9.12 pm): This morning the Premier said water is not a luxury; water is a necessity, and the Premier almost got it right. A more accurate statement is potable water is not a luxury; potable water is a necessity. This is a message that I hope that the councillors and the mayor of the Gladstone Regional Council hear: potable water is not a luxury; potable water is a necessity. The Gladstone Regional Council has failed to provide potable water to the residents of Bororen. It has been acknowledged that residents must boil the water that comes out of their taps.

It is also likely that the Gladstone Regional Council has failed to provide potable water to Miriam Vale as well. This is an indisputable fact. I had a conversation with Mayor George Creed who has publicly admitted that residents of Bororen must boil the water that comes out of their taps. The question that needs to be answered by the mayor of Gladstone and also the Queensland health minister is how long have the residents of Bororen—the families and the children—been allowed and forced to drink contaminated unpotable water? What have he and the councillors done to protect the children and families of Bororen and Miriam Vale?

Today I spoke to a Bororen gentleman whose name is Tommy Varker. Tommy says that he is 70 years old and retired in 2001 as a plumber. He was the council employee who was in charge of the Bororen and Miriam Vale water supply for about a decade. Tommy says that he is going to go to a public meeting this Monday evening and he is going to tell the truth about what happened at the old Miriam Vale shire council and the new Gladstone council. In summary, he says that Bororen residents have been drinking contaminated water for seven years. That happened because both councils have failed to properly maintain, manage and follow reporting procedures for both town water supplies. This is a very serious public health issue. The fix will be easy: just properly maintain the water treatment plants.

Tommy has agreed to go public with his allegations and will speak to the meeting on Monday evening. I invite the councillors of the Gladstone Regional Council to come to the meeting and also representatives from the health and education departments. I thank the health minister and the education minister for their cooperation and their actions to date, but I must stress: the residents of Bororen need their water tested. They want independent testing of that water. The community does not trust the council to provide those tests. There are a number of key questions to be answered. First and foremost, when did the Gladstone Regional Council first find out that the council's drinking water was contaminated?

(Time expired)