



Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 3 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coal Seam Gas Water

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (9.53 am): I am pleased to advise the House that the Bligh government has recently completed consultation on the management of coal seam gas water in Queensland. CSG production is booming in the state and is expected to increase significantly if a liquefied natural gas, LNG, industry is established.

Groundwater unavoidably brought to the surface during CSG production is considered a waste by-product from industrial activity. It may be approved, however, as a 'resource' where a beneficial use can be identified. Given the generally salty nature and poor quality of CSG water, only limited quantities can be used beneficially without requiring treatment. CSG water has the potential to cause environmental harm if released to land or waters through inappropriate management. So in October last year the government moved to better manage the potential environmental risks associated with current CSG water management practices and encourage beneficial use of this water for industrial, agricultural or residential use.

Key decisions outlined in the government's CSG water management policy included discontinuing large-scale use of evaporation ponds for CSG water disposal and making producers responsible for treatment and disposal of this water. The policy also requires water which cannot be directly injected underground or beneficially used to be collected for disposal.

While a number of key policy decisions were made last year, the government was also keen to hear the views of the broader Queensland community. At the beginning of last month, the government released a discussion paper which explained in greater detail the policy decisions made and canvassed issues confronting the industry as it grows to support a potential LNG industry. Consultation was facilitated through the government's 'have your say' website and will provide the government with a better understanding of what beneficial use applications are acceptable to the community.

After taking public comments for a month, the discussion paper closed on Monday. This consultation process reaffirms the government's commitment to ensuring environmentally sustainable development of the CSG industry in Queensland and creating economic development opportunities through the beneficial use of CSG water. The submissions are currently being reviewed by the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, and the views put forward will be taken into consideration when finalising the CSG water policy later in the year.