



Speech by


Hon. Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Thursday, 17 May 2012

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

CSG Industry

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (2.11 pm): Coal seam gas is already an important part of Queensland's energy supply, and its expansion will be an important part of Queensland's economic future. The industry is on track to deliver an estimated 18,000 jobs and to inject some \$60 billion in capital investment into the state economy. Royalty revenue and economic growth from this industry will be substantial and will bring benefit to people right across the state no matter where they live. The money that is earned from this industry will build our roads, our schools and our hospitals and improve our communities.

Justifiable community concerns have been clearly expressed about this industry both before and during the recent election campaign. In fact some candidates tried to take political advantage of this issue during the election campaign. The LNP made its position very clear: we support the expansion of the CSG industry in a responsible way and we have promised to ensure that it does develop in a responsible way. The CSG industry's interests must be balanced against those of landholders, communities and the environment.

We have been given a resounding mandate to carry out our commitments, and we have begun to do just that. Several weeks ago, I appointed the well-respected head of the Surat Basin engagement group, John Cotter, as the Gasfields Commissioner. We are asking the public for nominations for the other commissioner positions and for submissions on the powers that this new commission should have to restore public confidence in the industry. Mr Cotter will be given ombudsman-like powers, but we await to see the submissions from the community before proceeding further. Public submissions close next Friday, 25 May, after which we will legislate to establish the commission. I urge the community to be involved in this process. We need fair-minded people who can work with others to reach reasonable decisions that advance the wellbeing and prosperity of Queensland, while at the same time ensuring that the growth of this relatively new industry occurs in a balanced way with partnerships between communities, landholders and gas companies.

Today, one of the constant doomsday predictions about CSG—that it would put the entire Great Artesian Basin at risk—has been shown to be alarmist. The Queensland Water Commission's independent scientific study of underground water supplies found that there would be only relatively small impacts on the Great Artesian Basin and no long-term impact on that extremely valuable water resource, the Condamine Alluvium. Its draft report released today in Toowoomba finds just 85 of some 21,000 bores across the Surat Cumulative Management Area would be affected by the CSG industry in the next three years—85 out of 21,000 represents 0.3 per cent. The report predicts that in the longer term, over five years, only 2.4 per cent of bores will be affected. The report suggests that the overall impact therefore is relatively small, but every bore is important to a bore owner and every bore that is affected will be made good. Laws will require the CSG companies to do just that, and the Gasfields Commission will be an important part of making sure that those laws are enforced.

This report provides some very inconvenient findings for some of the alarmists out there whose real agenda has been to attack the fossil fuel industry per se. Unfortunately, what the report did not look at was the re-use of the extracted water because the water does not simply disappear. It can be treated and re-used for irrigation or other agricultural purposes or it can be reinjected into the groundwater systems, mitigating the extraction impacts and boosting the long-term sustainability of important irrigation aquifers such as the Condamine Alluvium.

This government wants to work on all of these issues in cooperation and consultation with those involved. This is in stark contrast to our predecessors who in the case of the CSG industry, as in so many other areas of state administration, left a concerning and costly mess through their sheer indecision and ineptitude. Let me assure the House that this government will be inclusive, we will be decisive and we will act to ensure that all Queenslanders benefit from the balanced, careful development of the CSG industry.