




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Irrigation, Local Management Arrangements Project

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (10.07 am): I am pleased to advise the House of the next stage of the Local Management Arrangements Project. Earlier this year I visited Eton, with the member for Mirani, and St George to meet with local irrigators to listen to their case for local management arrangements. I am pleased to report that irrigators in Eton, Emerald, St George and Theodore are now closer to managing their own irrigation schemes following the Palaszczuk government's decision to transfer ownership of the schemes into the hands of local irrigators. Irrigators accessing these schemes have demonstrated their strong commitment to the local management concept. These changes will empower local communities and encourage the growth of Queensland's agricultural economy, productivity and regional jobs.

Local management is designed to use local knowledge and know-how to reduce costs, increase productivity of the irrigation scheme and add value to our agricultural sector. Special structures will be established for these four schemes to commence the transition to local management, which is likely to occur over the next 12 to 18 months, subject to agreement between irrigators and the government.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: The opposition seems to be having problems with this decision. How embarrassing. Irrigators would be embarrassed.

The four companies will be led by boards of directors made up of local irrigators and appropriately skilled independent directors. This announcement has been welcomed by a wide range of stakeholders. Cotton Australia said that it is 'a significant step forward for growers in these districts' and thanked the government for 'backing the process to the next stage'. The Queensland Farmers' Federation commended the government 'for taking this step in supporting locally managed viable agriculture into the future'. The local irrigators interim board in Theodore said—

What this means for irrigators and the Theodore community cannot be underestimated. We are looking forward to working with the Queensland government and SunWater to ensure a smooth transition to local management.

Work will continue on the potential transition to local management for the Burdekin-Haughton, Bundaberg, Lower Mary and Mareeba-Dimbulah channel irrigation schemes. Interim boards will be established to conduct further investigations into a potential move to local management for these schemes and are expected to report back to the government within 12 months.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: One would think that members of the opposition would support this, but judging from their interjections I am doubtful about that. Local irrigators will be given the opportunity to respond to

expressions of interest to become directors and members of the interim boards and special purpose vehicles in the near future. I am happy to acknowledge that this was a process that began back in 2012 and I am proud that the Palaszczuk government is working closely with these irrigation communities to deliver better results.