




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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MOTION: WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.27 pm): If ever we wanted a reason or a justification as to why we are not getting water infrastructure in this state, we just heard it right there and then. They are too busy looking at excuses, too busy coming up with all the reasons not to deliver water infrastructure which is exactly what we need in this state going forward. It defies all logic that those opposite are dragging the chain on these 14 studies which will deliver the infrastructure that we need in this state.

On 13 September the Minister for Energy and Water Supply wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister and said—

I look forward to working with you to roll out the ... (National Water Infrastructure Development Fund) for the future benefit of Queenslanders and the broader community.

I say to the minister that talk is cheap. We now know that this government has no intention of rolling out those vital infrastructure projects in this state. That was supported by the Deputy Prime Minister yesterday in federal parliament when he said—

Although we have put \$19.8 million on the table for 14 studies, not one of them has been started. And not only have we put money on the table for the studies but we put \$130 million on the table to start Rookwood Weir so we can get further jobs to that area, an extra \$1 billion a year in income for the people of Central Queensland.

That is right; water equals economic development and, more importantly, jobs. This government has not committed any funds to the studies and now will not agree to distribute the federal funding in accordance with the long-established federal financial relations framework under which the Commonwealth Treasury pays state government Treasury funding for grants. In what can only be described as a red flag moment, correspondence from this minister to the Deputy Prime Minister seeks to reallocate the federal government's \$130 million funding for Rookwood Weir to another project.

That is right, and the people of Central Queensland need to know this. Labor does not support the development of the Rookwood Weir. I wonder what the member for Rockhampton and the member for Mirani are telling their constituents about that decision. I have brought investors to North Queensland and the first question they ask is, 'Where is the water?' They understand the importance of this resource, and if we are to develop North Queensland and expand our agricultural production we need water. We have the ludicrous situation at the moment where Townsville, the largest city in northern Australia, is running out of water. The residents of Townsville are currently experiencing level 3 water restrictions, and there is no end in sight until the next wet season. Townsville ratepayers will now foot the bill to pump water from the Burdekin Falls Dam to supplement the Ross River Dam which, I might add, is currently at 17 per cent. I ask the three local members from Townsville: why are you not hammering on the door of your minister to have these projects prioritised and fast-tracked? This is not the time to be pandering to the Greens. Agriculture has the potential to turn the state's fortunes around. It has the potential to generate the jobs and revenue to get this state back on track, and yet all we see from this do-nothing government are more delays and an unwillingness to take up the offer from the federal government.

Queenslanders should be worried that this money will be taken off the table because of the apathy of this government. These feasibility studies are crucial for the long-term planning and delivery of water infrastructure in this state. Imagine what we could do if we had water in the gulf, if we could build the Urannah Dam and irrigate 30,000 hectares of land around Collinsville, because these projects have the potential to boost agricultural production in this state by more than \$1 billion and create more than 2,000 new jobs. As members of this parliament we have an obligation and a duty to do what is right for Queensland, and there is no question in my mind that delivering these water infrastructure projects is the right thing to do for our state. The government's lack of action in distributing these grants is risking Queensland's ability to access the \$2 billion water loan facility from the federal government. This state desperately needs the dams, pipelines and other infrastructure that will generate easier access to affordable water for rural communities and grow economic opportunities in the regions.

Queensland received the largest share of any state for feasibility studies, and if ever there was a time to step up to the plate it is now. We need these water infrastructure projects to go ahead, and I call on this government to stop playing politics with this critical issue, stop pandering to the Greens and sign off on this funding. The LNP is committed to delivering these projects because those on this side of the House understand the importance of water and what it means to develop this state—

(Time expired)