




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Record of Proceedings, 8 August 2017

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL:
INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (3.58 pm): The day before the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee estimates hearing the results of the 2016 Working for Queensland survey were released. The results for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines showed a loss of confidence in departmental leadership in the areas of responsibility, engagement and innovation. It is a concern that staff in this key economic development agency have expressed declining confidence in its leadership. This department should be driving outcomes for the agriculture, mining and property sectors, which are pillars of the Queensland economy. Unfortunately, this result is not really a surprise when the department has been sidelined from key policy debates. Imagine what it would do for your morale in your department when your minister is publicly stripped of responsibility for key legislation and replaced as the government spokesperson by the likes of the Minister for Environment. The minister could not explain why his own departmental officers were losing faith in him and his senior executives. This portfolio should be a powerhouse for new projects and job creation, particularly in regional Queensland, but the reform process started under the previous government has stalled under Labor and red tape is making a comeback.

The Minister for Environment loomed large and ominously over the estimates committee hearing for the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee because that particular minister is running a bit of a political campaign to discredit the self-assessable vegetation management codes which have been implemented for routine land management practices. During the course of the committee I referred to the 2015 State of the Environment report, which makes misleading claims about these vegetation management activities. The Minister for Natural Resources should be working to maintain confidence in the self-assessable codes which are used for purposes for which they are named such as thinning, encroachment and regrowth, not perpetuating the fearmongering information being peddled by the environment minister. It is no wonder his departmental staff have very little confidence in him when he does not defend the work of that department.

The management of water is another area where the minister is struggling to maintain credibility. Almost 11 months after the EIS process for the IFED project lapsed, the Palaszczuk government has failed to release 467,000 megalitres of water for economic development opportunities in the Gilbert River catchment within the gulf water resource plan. Local farmers and landowners have every right to be anxious about Labor's proposal to only release 18.4 per cent of the available water in the Gilbert River catchment at a fixed price later this month. The minister claims to have consulted with the local community regarding this strategy, but at least one agricultural group within the catchment has since contradicted his assertion. The minister says his fixed price sale approach is based on recent prices for water allocations released in the Flinders catchment, but obviously the Gilbert catchment is a completely different system. The logic behind using the price achieved through a tender process in the Flinders for the release of a large volume of water in the Gilbert is certainly not clear. The current demand for water in the Gilbert catchment cannot be properly tested without a full release of unallocated reserves through

a tender process. The minister's excuse about holding back unallocated water for future shovel-ready projects is a red herring as applicants can be required to demonstrate their capability to use water as part of a normal tender process.

Finally, the estimates committee process also revealed that Labor's resource sector policies are all spin and no substance. For example, none of the Palaszczuk government's policies to deliver gas to the domestic market are currently delivering any additional gas to domestic customers. In fact, Labor's gas supply and demand action plan is already 18 months late. The Minister for Mines admitted to the committee that no modelling has been done to determine if its policy initiatives will have any impact whatsoever on domestic gas prices or supply. Despite all the hype and spin, the minister has no idea if the Palaszczuk government's tenure reservation policy will have any impact on the domestic supply or price of gas.

I asked the minister a straight question: when will those gas tenures released under Labor's policy first produce gas for consumers in the domestic market? The minister admitted to the committee that the tender process for these gas tenures had not yet been completed and that the market would ultimately determine when the gas would be produced. The fact is even if Labor sets aside areas of domestic gas supply, this does not mean that those reserves will be developed if there is no commercial return on the risk and capital outlay.

(Time expired)