




Speech By  
**Hon. Dr Steven Miles**  
**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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### **MOTION: TULLY-MILLSTREAM HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (6.26 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the member for Dalrymple. In the process I would like to congratulate him for moving it. The member for Hinchinbrook has been championing this particularly bad idea in his local press, but he has not spoken about it here in the parliament. He talks a good game up north, but when he gets down to the big smoke there is not a whisper. In fact, he has not even spoken about it tonight. The member for Dalrymple, to his credit, has spoken about this project seven times plus he moved this motion tonight.

Having said that, this has been a bad idea for two decades, and it still is. The Tully-Millstream hydro-electric scheme was first proposed more than 20 years ago, but it has never progressed because it just does not stack up—not economically and not environmentally. Not that we would expect that to stand in the way of the LNP holding a press conference. No, it took the questionable citizenship of their federal Nationals leader to stand in the way of their press conference.

The member for Hinchinbrook and Barnaby Joyce were all lined up to announce this old, bad idea again, but they had to cancel it because Barnaby discovered he was a Kiwi. While Barnaby is busy practising the haka, I will fill those opposite in on why this is such a bad idea. The last study undertaken on this project in 2012 concluded that it could cost between \$3 billion and \$4.2 billion. To make it viable, those opposite would need to charge more than \$200 per megawatt hour. That is compared to an average wholesale price of \$76 so far this financial year.

We know that the LNP like to increase power prices, but the increases that would be needed for this project are extreme even for them. This project would force the closure of two existing hydro projects because they would no longer have access to water. It would affect water flows in sections of the upper and lower Tully River, with huge environmental impacts. It would even have impacts on the local tourism industry and the white water rafting that happens there.

The Palaszczuk government does support hydro-electric generation where it stacks up. Under our Powering North Queensland Plan, we are undertaking a statewide hydro study to find appropriate locations for potential new hydro projects. We are taking advantage of existing assets like the Burdekin Dam and the Kidston hydro project—two projects those opposite are surprisingly quiet about—but those projects do not require us to sacrifice a World Heritage area.

Not content to just trash our most important World Heritage area—the Great Barrier Reef—when they were in government, the LNP now want to demolish our second most important World Heritage area. They are seriously demanding that we flood over 1,000 hectares of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area. They are talking about flooding what has been deemed by the World Heritage Committee to be the second most irreplaceable World Heritage area in the world. You would think that they would be embarrassed by the way the World Heritage Committee spoke about their government's lack of action on the reef. If it were left up to them, we would be a laughing stock again for flooding the Wet Tropics.

The Wet Tropics is the world's most ancient tropical rainforest. It is over 100 million years old. It contains 50 per cent of Australia's bird species, 65 per cent of Australia's fern species, 60 per cent of Australia's butterflies and 45 per cent of Australia's vertebrate animals.

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. You have had a pretty good go, member for Hinchinbrook. I know you are keen to talk, but I do not think there will be a time allocation for you.

**Mr Cripps:** There won't be.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, I don't think there will be.

**Mr Cripps:** I know that for sure. I don't have to think about it, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** All right. I will let the minister finish without too much interjection and we will have a vote.

**Dr MILES:** The Wet Tropics really are that special. The Wet Tropics is an Indigenous cultural landscape which has been managed by the Rainforest Aboriginal people for thousands of years. To those people, their environment provides everything—spirituality, identity, shelter, food and medicine—and those opposite would be happy to flood it without any consultation.

The habitat that would be inundated also includes significant stands of wet tall eucalypt forest. Now I have called the member for Hinchinbrook the LNP's environmental vandal-in-chief before, but this one is extreme even for him. I have a better idea. Why doesn't he get behind the 16 renewable energy projects in his turf that will generate 720 megawatts without flooding the habitat of one single species?

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

*(Time expired)*