




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 21 March 2018

MOTION: ROOKWOOD WEIR

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (5.31 pm): I rise to speak in support of the original motion moved by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Member for Glass House, just for your clarification it is Rockhampton and Rookwood Weir.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members, when the Speaker stands it means absolute silence from everyone. Member for Glass House, you have had a pretty good go. The next time you will be warned. Minister for Tourism, I do not need your interjections either.

Mr O'ROURKE: On 24 January, I stood proudly with the minister to release the Building Queensland business case for Rookwood Weir. Rookwood Weir could add 76,000 megalitres of water for agricultural production along the Fitzroy River as well as an eventual backup water supply for the Rockhampton, Gladstone and Livingston shires.

Rookwood Weir will enable the region to develop the potential for irrigated agricultural production including high-volume agriculture such as citrus, grapes and vegetables as well as cattle feedlots. This could further improve the supply of cattle for our two licensed meatworks and increase exports from our regions—more jobs! The construction of Rookwood Weir has the potential to assist Central Queensland to become the food bowl of the country. We have some high-value, quality agricultural land in this area and many other crops could also be grown.

We have so much potential in Rockhampton and Central Queensland. There is an airport located five kilometres from the Rockhampton city centre that has approximately 650,000 passengers passing through the terminal every year. Both domestic and international aircraft, including B747s, B776s and A340s service the Rockhampton terminal.

Today the Rockhampton Airport is a commercialised business unit of the Rockhampton Regional Council and turnover is in excess of \$15 million per annum, supporting the region's broader economy and community as a substantial regional gateway airport. It is the largest local government owned and operated airport in the nation by way of passenger numbers and aircraft movements. As well as being ranked by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics as Australia's ninth busiest regional airport, the Rockhampton Airport has a strong, established leadership presence within the Australian aviation industry. During Defence Force exercises held in Shoalwater Bay we see the very large cargo planes at our airport. Can you imagine the future potential we have for produce to be transported around the country?

The construction of the weir would create 100 construction jobs, and increased agricultural production would create many, many jobs. For this project to be economically viable, water would need to be used to boost agricultural production substantially. Without a fair contribution from Canberra the price of water will be too high for our farmers and other potential users. On 9 February the Premier of Queensland announced that the Queensland government would fund half of the \$352.2 million in

construction costs and half of the operational costs, pending matching funding from the Turnbull government. On the same day the leader of the federal opposition announced that a Shorten Labor government would fund the other half of the cost.

After the release of the business case I called the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, and offered to sit down and discuss a way forward with her so we could get this project happening. I have since met with the member for Capricornia on a couple of occasions in an effort to work together for the betterment of the people of Central Queensland and the people of my electorate in Rockhampton. The federal member needs to decide if she wants to represent and support the people of Central Queensland and fight for this funding. The federal government needs to put up its fair share. We need the jobs. This is a project that can create opportunities for Central Queensland. The people of Central Queensland need federal parliamentarians to stand up for them and secure funding from their bosses in Canberra.