




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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**STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (3.30 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution on the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee's report on the Auditor-General's report relating to financial matters of the Queensland government water entities. After reading the Audit Office report and hearing testimony at the public briefing on 14 May, it quickly became clear that this government is not particularly interested in water infrastructure and that it is instead intent on Queenslanders carrying the can for the rash and ill-advised decisions made by previous Labor governments, of which the Premier and much of the frontbench were members.

I am talking about decisions like the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme, a scheme that sits in care and maintenance and would take approximately two years to be recommissioned in the event that it is ever needed and a scheme that is costing Queenslanders every day. The Audit Office commented on the 'historical under-recovery of the cost of water' and the 'past acquisition of highly geared businesses' including 'climate-resilient manufactured water assets' such as the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme. Simply put, Queenslanders across the south-east are paying copious amounts for an asset that is not being used and is not likely to be used any time soon.

We have heard previously that the Palaszczuk government is not willing to ease the burden of high water prices by making the decision to alter the price path for bulk water prices. This is despite the former treasurer, the member for Mulgrave, suggesting that such a proposal had merit. Instead, Queenslanders in places like the Redlands, the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane will bear the impost of significantly increased water prices at a time when they are least in a position to do so.

Given that profits across the government owned water assets increased by 71 per cent in the 2017 financial year, the question needs to be asked: who is it that these assets are serving? Are they a profit centre for the government or do they exist to provide cheap, safe and reliable water for Queenslanders?

I note with concern that two significant high-risk matters were identified in risk control activities at SunWater. I am confident that those responsible at SunWater have taken steps to address those. An additional 13 control deficiencies have also been identified by the Queensland Audit Office across government owned water entities.

Queenslanders in my electorate tell me that high water prices and high electricity prices are becoming unsustainable and unworkable. Despite this, we see record high profits from government owned water assets and an unwillingness to address the problem by making the hard decisions like altering the price path for bulk water prices.

I call on the government to build the dams that will provide water security for all Queenslanders in a cost-effective manner. I call on the government to make the hard decisions to reduce the burden of bulk water prices on residents across the south-east.