



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 May 2018

**MOTION**

**Water Prices**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.58 pm): I move—

That this House calls on the Palaszczuk Labor government to rule out the Queensland Competition Authority's recommendation to charge more for water.

The LNP is listening to the people of South-East Queensland. We have heard loud and clear that Queenslanders are sick and tired of the cost-of-living increases, especially those imposed on them by government owned and controlled utilities. Residents in the South-East Queensland corner are again facing massive increases in bulk water prices under this Labor government. That is right: over the past 10 years successive Labor governments have delivered a more than 400 per cent increase in bulk water prices directly on to the bills of Queenslanders.

The latest blow to household budgets, however, came in the form of the Queensland Competition Authority which has recommended further price increases over the next three successive years, including over a five per cent increase for residents in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan, Moreton Bay, Scenic Rim and Somerset, an increase of \$47 over three years; over eight per cent on the Sunshine Coast and Noosa, an increase of \$79 over three years; and over nine per cent in Redlands, an increase of \$88 over three years. Over the next three years residents of South-East Queensland will be paying an average of \$50 to \$90 more. These increases are three to five times the rate of inflation and by any measure are totally unacceptable. This failure in addressing unfettered bulk water prices must not be able to continue unchecked. That is why the LNP is calling on the Premier to reject these higher water prices and not accept the determination of the Queensland Competition Authority. We are asking the Premier and her government to step up to the plate and deliver price relief for South-East Queenslanders.

Queenslanders are struggling to make ends meet. They are faced with skyrocketing electricity, water, fuel and rego costs and it has to stop. These water price increases affecting South-East Queensland consumers are a direct result of Labor's failure to plan for the future. These price increases are a result of the Beattie and Bligh Labor government's legacy that wasted billions of taxpayers' dollars on a problem that did not eventuate. How could we forget Labor's multibillion dollar water grid failures that delivered pipes without dams and dams without pipes? Labor's \$9 billion water grid waste has locked the state into a water price path spiral based on paying back large amounts of debt for projects that never materialised or just sit idle. This water waste has condemned South-East Queensland residents to higher water prices year after year after year.

Let us go through Labor's greatest hits: \$2.6 billion for the western corridor recycled water pipeline that is costing \$10 million a year to maintain; the \$1.2 billion Tugun desalination plant, now in hot stand-by mode and costing \$15 million a year to maintain; \$373 million for the Wyaralong Dam near Boonah that was never connected to the water grid because the water in the dam is so mineralised it is cheaper to produce desalinated water than to treat it; and the failed Traveston Dam experiment, a

project that cost \$715 million and never started but destroyed communities and livelihoods of generational farmers in the Mary Valley. The desalination plant and the recycled water scheme continue to cost Queenslanders \$152 million a year in interest payments alone, and that is a disgrace.

Let us contrast that with what the LNP did during its time in government to address the water price spiral, delivering every household in South-East Queensland an \$80 water bill rebate and reducing bureaucratic waste by merging the three state owned water businesses—the SEQ Water Grid Manager, LinkWater and the former Seqwater—estimated to save \$822 million by 2028. We had a plan for the future with WaterQ—a 30-year plan for water security in this state. The LNP had a plan, we acted on it and we delivered for Queenslanders because that is what the LNP does: we fix up Labor's mess.

It is time to draw the line on this chapter of unchecked bulk water price increase in South-East Queensland. It is not sustainable and it is hurting residents, especially those who can least afford it. Queenslanders should no longer have to foot the bill for this and previous Labor governments' reckless spending and mismanagement of taxpayers' money. I call on the House to support the motion and put an end to unsustainable bulk water prices in Queensland.