




Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Record of Proceedings, 16 May 2018

MOTION

Water Prices

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (5.14 pm): I rise to oppose the motion and the rubbish from those opposite who oppose investment in any form of infrastructure unless it is over four years away in the forward estimates—in the world of hopes and dreams. I will not talk about the carnage that was wrought large by the Newman government when it was in power.

It is essential that South-East Queensland households and businesses have a safe, secure and reliable water supply. We have seen how critical water supply and security is in cities such as Cape Town. Earlier this year, when Cape Town revealed that it was fast hurtling towards the moment it would become the first city on earth to run out of water, it caught the world's attention. Cape Town Deputy Mayor Ian Neilson admitted that the city was taken by surprise by the three-year drought that led to dire warnings. He also said—

You must start putting things into place before this disaster happens so you already have this resilience built in.

Cape Town is now driving projects relating to groundwater and desalination plants. We on this side of the House deliver for our community. We deliver key infrastructure that protects and ensures that we are on the front foot building resilience into our communities. This grid is an important asset for South-East Queensland that allows for an operational response to drought, thereby slowing the drawdown of storages and providing more time to capture replenishing rainfall. In addition to responding to a drought, the grid also assists with undertaking maintenance work and minimises the risk of short-term supply interruptions. Seqwater is tasked to balance a number of factors in the operation of the grid, including efficient operation, maintaining a safe and reliable water supply to meet the day-to-day needs of Queenslanders as well as operating a system to manage drought conditions as they arise over extended periods. We must protect South-East Queensland against drought—droughts that will only become more severe and harsher owing to climate change. We cannot ignore the future need for water in South-East Queensland. That would indeed be a folly.

With this investment in our grid, we now have important assets such as the Gold Coast desalination plant that helps to ensure that South-East Queensland has safe and secure bulk water. The plant is in hot stand-by mode and is called upon regularly to supply water into the Seqwater grid, including when conventional water treatment plants are being repaired or damaged, as was the case during Tropical Cyclone Debbie in 2017. In hot stand-by mode, Seqwater operates the plant three times a fortnight and produces a small volume of drinking water that is added to our supply. While in hot stand-by mode, if required, the desalination plant can reach 100 per cent capacity in 72 hours. In recent times the grid has been pumping water to the Sunshine Coast owing to significant water shortages, which is another example of flexibility that this infrastructure will provide into the future for areas such as those represented by the member for Buderim. This government builds water infrastructure. We ensure that communities in South-East Queensland have safe, secure and reliable water.

Redland City Council residents benefit from the water grid. In the event of drought or an emergency, the water grid ensures water security for Queenslanders. For example, in 2014, when fires cut power to North Stradbroke Island, the water treatment plant kicked in. Since 2008, Seqwater has been subsidising water for customers by providing water at below or at cost. When there was a substantial investment in drought proofing our communities, a decision was made not to raise prices for the people of South-East Queensland.

The cost of providing water to some areas is cheaper than it is to others. The price path is designed to ensure that all Seqwater customers equitably pay the same in sharing the benefits of South-East Queensland's water. The people of Redlands have been blessed to benefit from both access to the grid and some of Queensland's cheapest water prices. The Redlands is an absolutely spectacular place to live. In fact, I believe there is nowhere better in the world.

We need the water grid. Every Queensland, every Queensland family, every Queensland business needs it. Unlike those on the other side of the House, the Palaszczuk government will always fight for what is best for Queenslanders. We will ensure that Queenslanders have access to reliable, safe and secure water sources.