Speech By

Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

Mr WEIR (Condamine—LNP) (3.43 pm): This report began in the term of the 55th Parliament. It was not finalised when the parliament was dissolved for the 2017 election. The report was then referred to the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee to finalise. I was a member of the former agriculture committee, as was the member for Ipswich West. We did a lot of work on this issue. This issue had been in the hands of another committee before it was referred to our committee, so this report has had a long gestation period. The trigger for this report was the 2011 floods. No small part of that trigger was when the Mount Crosby treatment plant was inundated with mud and Brisbane faced a water crisis.

There was an investigation as to what could mitigate the impact of such flood events. In saying that, we all remember the flood of 2011. At that time, I was living on a farm out at Cecil Plains. That area is a flat flood plain. That year, I had never seen water flow so fast. Not far away from where I live is Toowoomba. None of us will ever forget what happened in Toowoomba and what then went down the range to hit the towns of Grantham and Withcott and the death and destruction that followed down there.

The committee looked at how that flood impact could be better managed. We see a lot of footage of floods occurring—not only in Australia but throughout the world—where houses are washed away. I do not remember seeing that before. As we develop, we create more run-off. That water finds its way into the streams. In agriculture, all paddocks are laser levelled. They are drained. The water flows off them into the drains and the streams quicker. As we build more houses, shopping centres and more roads, more water falls onto hard surfaces and finds its way into the river streams much faster than it used to. That compounds the problem.

As I speak now, we are going through one of the worst droughts on record. For example, so far this year Clifton and Pittsworth have not received five inches of rain. Their average rainfall is somewhere around 26 inches, so the rainfall there is a long way short. Sometimes that rainfall averages out by the end of the year. If that happens, we will have a lot of rain between now and then. That will mean a lot of erosion.

During the committee's consideration of this issue, we saw some work that was being done to try to repair damage to rivers and to try to slow down the flow of water. We went out to the Logan River and saw the works that had been carried out there. There is still a lot to do. It was apparent that the work that is needed to mitigate these disasters is beyond the scope of just one council. The committee studied the areas covered by the Toowoomba, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley and Somerset council areas. One of the recommendations of the report was—

... in the absence of stand-alone catchment management authorities, the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning ... Fulfil its obligation under the State Disaster Management Plan to drive the enhancement of flood resilience in the four catchments.

The report goes on to make a number of recommendations, including developing strategies and plans in consultation with the four councils, developing flood plain management plans and working together to effectively and economically regulate levee banks. Although levee banks can be a help, if they are constructed in the wrong place they become a danger and a menace.

Part of this report was dedicated to warning systems, particularly in the Lockyer Valley. That area had very little warning of what was coming. Now, a lot of monitoring stations are being put down both the rivers and streams to give more warning of an impending disaster. This report contains a lot of good recommendations, but there is still a long way to go. It is still a work in progress.