



Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**


**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 October 2019

**MOTION**

**Paradise Dam, Parliamentary Inquiry**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.35 pm): I rise to oppose this motion for the simple fact that this motion is a stunt. If those opposite want to run an inquiry as a political circus then I want no part of it. This issue should not be a political circus. It is about water security. This motion wants my committee to run it as a political issue. News flash—we are not engineers, we are politicians. Here is an idea: let us leave it for the engineers to investigate and listen to their report. How innovative is that? Those opposite want to ignore the engineer's advice. They would have kept the water there threatening the communities downstream.

I would say to those moving this motion if they are really interested in an investigation into water infrastructure and water security they would support an investigation into the federal government's drought response. The feds are not supporting the creation of water security in Queensland. The federal Drought Communities Program is being used for everything else but the creation of water security and water infrastructure. So far in 2019 \$100 million has been granted. Each community gets \$1 million. Imagine what would happen if that was put into the communities around where the Paradise Dam irrigators are. Guidelines say that council cannot use the funds for core council business, but look what they have done—cemetery upgrades, public toilets and a virtual gym. I cannot blame councils. Once they get a scheme with that criteria they will use it. I blame the federal government for this.

As the Premier said, the feds are not putting any money on the table for Rookwood Weir. I will repeat what the Premier has said this morning—

... there has been a constant fight with the federal government in relation to the Rookwood Weir. Let me make it very clear: this government has put our first tranche of money on the table.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118.

**Mr SPEAKER:** It is a different standing order for a general debate.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members to my right. I am allowing some latitude given it is a very broad motion. At the same time, I will ask the member to ensure he is being relevant to the motion at hand.

**Mr WHITING:** I will expand on where I believe this inquiry should go. At the moment those opposite are asking about Paradise Dam. If they are truly serious about water security in the state of Queensland they would, for instance, be calling for an investigation into what has happened to the \$5 billion Future Drought Fund. We have heard today of the federal government's inaction when it comes to water infrastructure. There is a \$5 billion fund there. What are they doing with it? Nothing! What we see from the feds is a lack of understanding and a lack of commitment to the people who are doing it tough in this state, people like those irrigators who rely on Paradise Dam.

The federal LNP government has a great chance to make a real difference to water infrastructure and security here in Queensland and it is not using it. If we are looking for an investigation into the inaction on water security, let us investigate why members of the LNP decided they needed to go to Luna Park to hear about drought. I do not know what they would have reported back. 'What can we see? The lawn of Admiralty House at Kirribilli looks a bit brown.'

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Bancroft, I have been listening to your contribution. You need to come back to the motion as moved by the Leader of the Opposition, otherwise I will ask the next speaker to seek the call.

**Mr WHITING:** I find it really hard to understand the fundamental intent of this motion from the LNP. The struggles of our drought affected communities are being felt by all of us. The farmers we on this side have spoken to understand that the safety of a dam such as this is paramount. That is our first priority. The only people who struggle to understand issues of safety are the people opposite. Once again, they do not want to listen to the engineers. They say, 'Let's have a political inquiry. Let's get a bunch of us to decide on these fundamental engineering issues.'

One of the things that we do know is that the water being released from Paradise Dam is for the use of or storage by growers and farmers. What we see with this motion is a classic example of the double standards of those on the other side. It is beyond comprehension that the same people who blame everyone but themselves—and everyone but their colleagues in Canberra, who have not funded water infrastructure, as I have said—are now complaining that this government is offering free water to irrigators.

**An honourable member:** Free!

**Mr WHITING:** It is free of charge to irrigators, much to the delight of those irrigators. I fail to understand why this motion has been moved and I oppose it.

*(Time expired)*