



Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

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#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation Bill**

#### **State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee, Report**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.53 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation Bill and the budget estimates process. Let the record clearly show that today the minister stood in this place and, in his five-minute contribution, did not once mention natural resources, mines or water. What a disgrace that is. Queenslanders are right to question the ability of this Labor government when there is no surety of adequate funding for key departmental functions, a blatant disregard for Queenslanders' health and safety, ignorance of the infrastructure Queensland needs and a minister who has little to no knowledge of key projects.

The budget estimates process highlighted this government's attempt to withhold information from Queenslanders. No matter where they live, Queenslanders are entitled to clean water and they are entitled to know that the water they are giving their children is safe. It is a disgrace that a senior minister of this government would not know and would not provide answers when asked which water providers in this state are noncompliant. Any breakdown in the process of ensuring clean safe water for Queenslanders is a major concern. The fact that there are at least 10 providers in this state that are noncompliant is not something that can be simply overlooked. This cover-up is nothing short of a disgrace and Queenslanders deserve to know.

On the subject of water, both the budget and the estimates hearing confirmed that the government is anti dams. Again we heard excuses rather than answers on the lack of funding for projects such as Nullinga Dam, delays to the commencement of Rookwood Weir and the raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam to its originally intended capacity. However, maybe those opposite are finally starting to understand the importance of dams in this state. Despite no mention of it in the budget papers or during estimates, the Palaszczuk government has finally committed to the Emu Swamp Dam in the Southern Downs area. I bet that left the same bitter taste in their mouths as did the great Adani backflip. 'Bitter' would be one way of describing the Rookwood Weir debacle as well, especially after it was disclosed during estimates that the minister's time line is out by two full years.

How can Queenslanders have faith in this government when it comes to dams? Quite simply, they cannot! What we currently have in Queensland is a government that has failed to ensure that safety works at our three newest dams are on schedule. When it comes to the Paradise Dam, this minister will not even commit to maintaining its current capacity. I say to the minister that it is very simple: Queensland needs more dams and more water storage, not less.

However, it is not only that simple fact that the government overlooks. They fail to recognise that we need sensibly priced water for industry. Whilst we are seeing cost blowouts at SunWater, the minister refuses to rule out passing on the cost of those blowouts to irrigators via cost-reflective pricing. This government is committed to increasing uncertainty and angst for our farmers, which is not surprising based on their recent form. Until the minister does something to rein in overspending, any attempt to burden Queensland's agricultural sector with price increases will be seen for what it is: using primary producers as cash cows to cover up his incompetence.

It has been well documented that there have been six fatalities in the resources sector over the past 12 months. Those six fatalities have torn apart families and communities throughout this state and they have shone the spotlight on mine safety and, more importantly, the health and safety of our mine employees. Perhaps the minister can explain why a reduction in the number of mine inspections was allowed under his watch. Despite the minister's assurances that deep dive audits were being undertaken, in relation to quarries the Executive Director of Resource Safety and Health, Mr Stone, said, 'We did fewer of those deeper dive audits and inspections that take multiple days and instead prioritised many more shorter inspections.' I ask the minister: which one is it? What is the real problem? Queensland's resource workers and their families deserve an answer. Is it insufficient resources or is the system simply broken? Either way, the minister owes them and all Queenslanders an answer.

The LNP makes no apology for seeking the answers that Queenslanders deserve when it comes to these important projects, industries and infrastructure. The minister's refusal to provide those answers is a stunning indictment on the current government.