



Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 October 2019

**MOTION**

**Paradise Dam, Parliamentary Inquiry**



**Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.09 pm): I move—

1. That the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee investigate the Paradise Dam's design, construction and operation; and the Palaszczuk government's decision to lower the dam wall by five metres.
2. The committee should consider:
  - (a) the design of the dam and whether it was appropriate;
  - (b) how the dam was constructed including under a competitive alliance contract, the impact of Walter Construction Group going into receivership halfway through and the use of roller compacted concrete;
  - (c) how the dam has been operated;
  - (d) how the permanent reduction in the capacity of the dam will impact the region's water security and agricultural production and the flow-on effects to the regional economy and jobs;
  - (e) why the Palaszczuk government has decided to lower the dam by five metres, releasing 105,000 megalitres of water in just 10 weeks; and
  - (f) whether a claim could be made against those who built the dam or under Sunwater's insurance arrangements.
3. In conducting the hearing, the committee is asked to:
  - (a) conduct hearings in the Wide Bay region; and
  - (b) order those involved in the design and construction of the dam to appear at the inquiry.

Almost two-thirds of this state is in drought. From McKinlay shire to the Scenic Rim, our regions are crying out for water. Farmers are going to the wall each and every week. In Stanthorpe, water is being trucked in every day, just so families can cook and wash, so that children can have a bath. In the Wide Bay-Burnett, the Palaszczuk government has just flushed 105,000 megalitres of precious water into the Coral Sea. Producers across this state have simply watched in despair as this precious water pours out of Paradise Dam. They cannot believe that water is being wasted on such a shocking scale in the middle of one of Queensland's worst droughts. People living in drought-declared Bundaberg and Burnett have rightfully demanded an explanation. They want to know what on earth is going on with Paradise Dam. The Palaszczuk Labor government has simply refused to tell them. It has refused to tell those communities why their water is being wasted. Labor will not say what is wrong with the dam, and that was the dam it built. It will not say how it will fix it or when.

Those opposite cannot treat Queenslanders with such contempt. They cannot threaten people's livelihoods and their futures and then just tell them to suck it up. We need answers from this arrogant Palaszczuk Labor government, and that is why the LNP is demanding a full parliamentary inquiry into the dam debacle: an open and public inquiry into the dam's design, the dam's construction and the dam's operation; an inquiry into the Palaszczuk Labor government's decision to cut the dam's capacity to 42 per cent.

I want that inquiry to go to Bundaberg and the Burnett region to hear from those locals who have been affected by this decision. I want the Labor Party to get out of its bunker here in Brisbane and listen to what regional Queenslanders actually have to say because that is what I did, because, unlike Labor, I have not forgotten that we work for Queenslanders. We are their servants. It is not the other way around. Our farmers and our canegrowers depend on Paradise Dam. Free water now is of very little use to them because they were not prepared for it. They were not notified in advance of it, and it is not free to pump the water. It actually costs growers an absolute fortune and the minister—

**Mr Perrett** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I take that interjection from the member for Gympie; those opposite do not understand drought. The Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy should know about the costs to pump water because he is the one who is ripping off electricity users with a secret tax on their power bills. What producers fear is that there will be no water in the future because if there is not their businesses will be finished, and it is not just the producers who will be hit. The local tourism operators are talking about this. They are already affected by this diabolical decision to drain the dam. With Christmas just around the corner, tourism operators say that there will be no access for up to six months and campers will have to endure the stench of rotting vegetation. Draining Paradise Dam will damage the economy of that entire region.

We know that the Labor Party government has not built a dam in regional Queensland since 2005 and now it appears that that dam it did build was a botched job. The Paradise Dam cost the people of Queensland \$200 million to build. How much more will it cost to fix it and why has the dam only lasted for 13 years? Queenslanders cannot have confidence in Labor's ability to deliver infrastructure until we have the answers to those questions. Queenslanders cannot trust the Palaszczuk Labor government full stop. Queenslanders want answers and only a full parliamentary inquiry will provide them.