



Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 16 October 2019

MOTION

Paradise Dam, Parliamentary Inquiry

Mr BUTCHER (Gladstone—ALP) (5.14 pm): Tonight I rise to oppose the member for Nanango's motion. When it comes to matters of community safety, most parliaments right across Australia enjoy bipartisan support, but unfortunately not here in Queensland from those opposite. They are desperate. They are simply a political party that has not seen an issue that they could not politicise in this state, and even issues of public safety are not out of the question.

On 24 May Minister Dr Anthony Lynham announced that a technical investigation into Paradise Dam under SunWater's ongoing safety program discovered issues could exist in an extreme weather event, and we know what those extreme weather events are like here in Queensland: just ask those members in Far North Queensland. The expert advice is to lower the spillway and increase community safety, meaning water needs to be released from Paradise Dam ahead of this year's wet season.

It is not something ScoMo or Barnaby or Littleproud ordered us to say. It is not diamond members from the LNP pulling the strings. It is a matter of community safety and we are acting on expert advice. It took less than 24 hours for the opposition leader to make a political issue out of this. They take any opportunity that they possibly can. They have no shame. It is no surprise that they will turn a community safety issue into a political issue because the LNP plays politics with dams, and we know that. It politicised due diligence on Emu Swamp and then it pretends to take the high moral ground on dams today.

With regard to Rookwood Weir, we have a federal government, supported by its mates opposite here, that never, ever wanted Rookwood Weir to go ahead. I am still waiting to see one red cent come from the LNP in Australia for Rookwood Weir. To be frank, I am sick of waiting and I am also sick of members in the north such as Landry and Canavan parading around just lying to people about water infrastructure and dams, particularly in my region in Central Queensland.

Mr STEVENS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr BUTCHER: They are hypocrites when it comes to the matter of water.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Pause the clock please.

Mr STEVENS: Clearly we had unparliamentary language by the member and he should withdraw those comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have been listening quite intently—I have been—

Mr Stevens: The 'I' word.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I know the 'I' word, but it was not used as a direction towards members of the opposition.

Mr BUTCHER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am happy to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! One moment please. Sorry, member for Mermaid Beach. I do stand corrected. You have a point of order and I ask the member for Gladstone to withdraw.

Mr BUTCHER: I withdraw. The Prime Minister sat across the table from the Premier of Queensland on 12 July this year and ruled out more money for the Rookwood Weir. They do not care about dams. We know that for a fact. If they did, they would have money on the table right now. Our government makes no apologies for putting community safety first. We ask those opposite to stop making a political issue out of this. The government is acting on expert advice that has been given to it. Following our announcement, Engineers Australia stated—

Dam operators are doing the right thing by prioritising safety ...

It said that with regard to this dam wall, further stating that—

Dropping the water level ... reduces the forces on the dam dramatically and it removes the risk of anything untoward happening in the short term.

Community safety is paramount and this government is acting on expert advice to lower the spillway and lower the level ahead of the coming wet season—a decision that was certainly not taken lightly in this current climate, as we heard today.

To increase safety, 80,000 megalitres of free water is being released over the next 10 weeks to lower the dam. Two standpipes have been installed to make the water more accessible and a third is being investigated with the Bundaberg Regional Council for that free water. Water is also being released into four watercourses not normally supplied by this dam. That means irrigators with water access rights already on the Elliott River, Mahogany Creek, the Gregory River and Logging Creek will also have access to this free water from this dam. This will further maximise productive use of the water that is being released. I am sure that members would be glad to hear that drought affected farmers are already taking advantage of this free water for irrigation and storage. This motion is another example of a party that is more interested in politics. This motion is further evidence of why the LNP is never, ever—and never will be—fit to govern in this wonderful state of Queensland.