




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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MOTION

Paradise Dam, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (5.51 pm): This is a very important motion. It is of huge disappointment, to say the least, to my electors in Southern Downs to see hundreds of thousands of megalitres of water going to waste. The government is saying that there are safety issues concerning the dam. We have very little to go by in that regard. Why not have an open parliamentary inquiry on this?

If we listen to the members who have skin in the game, like my honourable friend the member for Burnett and my honourable friend the member for Bundaberg, they speak with the authority of people who represent tens of thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on this dam. It is a young dam. It is a disgrace that it should be reduced to less than half its capacity because of some sort of failure. The people of Queensland have a right to know what has gone wrong. This is the forum for it.

It is a great discourtesy to this parliament and its members and the people involved to say that this is not something that the parliament should be considering. This deserves to be the subject of an open inquiry. My honourable friend the honourable member for Condamine just mentioned to me that his committee, the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee, does not have a single bill before it at the moment. They are obviously playing hooky and chess most of the time. It is about time we gave them something to do. I know my committee is pretty busy.

There is no reason this should not be done. Whenever this Labor government wants to conceal something, we have to ask ourselves why. Why do they not want public scrutiny? Why do they want to conceal from the public the reasons behind this? What is wrong with the dam? We need to know the answers to this. These are appropriate questions to be addressed by the parliament. The report of the independent inquiry that the government speaks of can be concealed and withheld. It can be withheld like the drought report was for 12 months.

We do not trust this Labor Party government. Water is extremely vital to irrigated agriculture in the Burnett and Bundaberg regions as it is my region. When I listen to my honourable friend the assistant treasurer talk about Emu Swamp Dam, as others have done today, I remind the state government that it owns the resource. The state government has in its power the ability to approve or deny these dams.

The federal government stands willing and able to provide funds, as has been shown, but the state has the propensity to go slow. I see the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy opposite. I welcome the \$13.6 million announcement which, with great mirth, I noticed had to wait until the Deputy Premier and Treasurer was in disgrace and overseas. Nevertheless, it gave heart to my community.

The department is going slow and the government is going slow. We are not seeing action on Emu Swamp Dam yet. I am starting to wonder whether this is going to be another Rockwood Weir. It is not going to be on my watch. I am going to fight for the people of Southern Downs to make sure that that dam happens because we need it. I will allow other members to speak knowing that time is short. I urge every member in this House to support this motion.