



Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 15 May 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Palm Island, Water Supply

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.08 am): The Palaszczuk government has a strong record of investing in critical infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including Palm Island. Our \$120 million Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program includes \$6.1 million for Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council over four years. It is designed to deliver repairs and upgrades to critical water, wastewater and solid waste infrastructure—ensuring safe drinking water for Palm Island residents. The council also received \$1.2 million under the 2015-16 Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program to upgrade the Palm Island water treatment plant, an asset that I have inspected personally with the mayor.

As the owner of these water assets, Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council has an obligation to properly maintain them for the benefit of local residents. The state government has been working with council to tackle the water asset maintenance challenges the local community has faced in recent times. State government engineers have visited Palm Island at least 10 times in 2018 and 2019 when water quality issues have been reported by council. On that note, I acknowledge that the member for Townsville has been an ongoing advocate for supporting the council in these times.

In May this year when the latest issues emerged, engineers committed to undertake a detailed operational assessment of the water supply system to identify any infrastructure upgrades that may be required. Engineers found the source of the fault causing these issues in May was a water pressure sensor and this was replaced by the state government at a cost of \$360,000. Since then, the 'do not drink' order that had been in place has been lifted. Engineers will be on Palm Island again today continuing to assess the situation.

In another important development, yesterday federal Labor committed \$3 million to address water supply issues on Palm Island. We welcome this important contribution which will be earmarked for any future water infrastructure needs arising from my department's audit. In total, federal and Queensland Labor have now committed more than \$10 million to improving water quality on Palm Island. We will continue to work with the local community to ensure a safe drinking water supply is available for all residents.