




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Palm Island, Water Supply

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.06 am): I would like to update the House on Palm Island which, as we all know, has been having water issues for the past year. In May this year two external consultants were appointed to do a full review of the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council's water and wastewater issues.

As a result of this review, in June this year I announced six priority projects that, when completed, will address the problems. These include installing a monitoring system; thoroughly cleaning the main drinking water tank, including replacing the roof and making it vermin proof; decommissioning two water treatment plants and replacing them with one large tank; installing more backwash and sludge tanks; installing a new raw waterline from the Solomon Dam; and installing a new rising main.

Through the Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program the Palaszczuk government has provided \$6.1 million so far so that five of these projects can be completed. The sixth, the rising main from the water treatment plant to the main reservoir, will be a significant and complex project. My department has determined that it will cost about \$2 million to complete, which brings me to this year's federal election when the LNP promised \$2 million to make sure that Palm Island has a safe and secure supply of drinking water.

We have not seen anything so far, so last night I signed a letter to the federal Minister for Indigenous Australians asking him to deliver on their commitment to the people of Palm Island. That reminds me what a friend the people of Palm Island have in the member for Townsville. He has been relentless in his advocacy for that community and has had regular meetings with the mayor, Alf Lacey, and other councillors and community members on the island.

I would like to thank the various departments and the Palm Island council for the work they have already been doing to improve water quality. The island's five water reservoirs have been cleaned, with work finalised on 11 October, although I understand that the water will still be a little discoloured for a bit longer. As for the lifting of the boiled water notice, that will be a decision made by the council in consultation with Queensland Health.

As for the six priority infrastructure projects, if Canberra can actually get around to signing the cheque, all six are expected to be delivered in the next two years. Let us face it, the island's residents do not need a seagull politician such as the LNP member for Herbert flying in and promising them the world before an election and then not delivering it afterwards—although I am not sure he has been back. Palm Islanders have a right to ensure that their families—their children—have access to clean drinking water and that is what the Palaszczuk government is doing. We are doing our bit. What we are asking now is for a little help from our friends in Canberra who seem to have forgotten that thanking Queenslanders is not enough after an election; it is time for them to keep their promise.