



Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**


**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Rookwood Weir

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (6.18 pm): I am proud to represent an area that has some of the best agricultural land in Australia. With the right policies, infrastructure and support, I believe the region has the potential for extraordinary economic growth and expansion.

The new Rookwood Weir project, which is to be built along the Fitzroy River in Central Queensland, will be situated in an area that contains more than 45,000 hectares of land suitable for irrigated crops. If done right, it will underpin agricultural production and expansion in the Fitzroy area for many years to come. A reliable supply of irrigation water is vital to enable the region's farmers to transition to high-value agriculture. It is also hoped that access to new water supplies will boost business investment in the region and give farmers the opportunity to move to intensive irrigated crop production, which will achieve higher returns and allow them to expand and create more job opportunities. Therefore, it has been a great disappointment to farmers and communities in the region to find that the bickering and buck-passing by the state and federal governments is threatening the success of the project.

Many are worried that regional Queensland is about to be short-changed on quality and much needed regional infrastructure, leaving them high and dry by the state government yet again. Earlier this year the minister, Dr Anthony Lynham, said the estimated cost of the project was now likely to exceed the initial budget due to a blowout in the price of concrete. The result has been a number of key changes being made to the project's design, not least of which will be a 30 per cent reduction in its capacity for water storage.

Key design changes include using a lower grade of concrete for the construction and a reduction in the weir's height. The original earth embankment with gated flow-through has also been changed to a smaller embankment with no gate. Farmers, graziers and townspeople through Central Queensland are frustrated and angry at this downgrading of the project and are calling on the government to stick with the original plan. As one farmer in my electorate said—

One minute you look as though you've got access to water, the next minute it's all gone, especially because I'm on the tail end of it so if the weir gets lowered I won't get any of it.

The people of Central Queensland want Rookwood Weir built at full capacity at 76,000 megalitres. It is simply not good enough to say it is too expensive. It was this government's decision to pursue policies that frittered away billions on wasteful green projects and so-called innovation initiatives. Country areas have been starved of investment and infrastructure for many years now. They should not be made to pay the price for all that waste with substandard and underfunded water infrastructure.

Without full capacity, the money spent on the weir will be largely wasted and future growth in the region hampered. As one federal member said recently, you can do the numbers; if you take 22,000 megalitres off that 76,000, you are not going to be left with any long-term backup for agriculture.

What I am hearing from farmers is that there has been virtually no consultation from the Queensland government around final water allocations for farmers. All they know is that so far there has been little progress made.

*(Time expired)*