



Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Economics and Governance Committee, Report

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.45 pm): The member for Ferny Grove has to call himself that because no-one else in Queensland calls him the farmers' friend. I rise to add my contribution to this debate. Everyone on this side of the House is most disappointed with the outcome of the estimates process in so many of the different hearings, but I am really disappointed because it is obvious that this government does not seem to understand the consequences of the lack of planning for water security in this great state of ours.

We know the hearing was simply a protection racket for the minister and the government. We had time-wasting antics by the chair, and those Dorothy Dixers from those opposite could not even be answered properly by the minister when he bothered to attempt to respond to them. The rhetoric shown in the water estimates hearing was the exact same smug attitude that continues to starve Queensland of any major infrastructure projects. The hearing clearly exposed the fact that the minister's role as regional development minister is purely one of PR. It is a role that is all show and zero substance, and that came out quite clearly.

I raised concerns about the cost-benefit analysis conducted by the state when determining the viability of water storage infrastructure in Queensland. It was put to the minister that, given the current 30-year life span factored in—by Labor—to the full cost recovery of dam construction management, business cases are essentially set up to fail. The current method does not consider that dams can—and do—last well over 50 years, and with new technology new dams inevitably will last longer than that; therefore, the cost benefit of a dam is clearly significantly higher than what is being forecast. We know we have touched a nerve when the minister spent two minutes of his five carrying on about the pork-barrelling I uncovered in the minister's electorate.

What did we hear? The budget papers show \$26 million in funding for the Gladstone electorate. I, of all people in this House, do not begrudge regional funding for water projects; however, it does appear a little bit smelly when one electorate gets \$26 million. What did the Mount Isa Water Board, Seqwater and SunWater get between them? There is absolutely no provision for capital grants, yet the member for Gladstone's electorate got \$8.2 million in unidentified capital grants—unidentified capital grants! Talk about pork-barrelling by the water minister!

Let's get to regional development. Like I say, I welcome any funding into water projects, but when it comes to Paradise Dam we saw the debacle when the member for Bundaberg tried to justify his idiotic statement—I withdraw, sorry—on local TV where he said that in order to restore confidence to growers 'he will have another form of infrastructure if the capacity of Paradise Dam is to be reduced.'

When questioned, the minister was unable to answer what the heavens the member for Bundaberg was going on about because the minister knows that the Palaszczuk government has no plan to build another water infrastructure to restore the water security for the people of the Bundaberg-Wide Bay region. The member for Bundaberg has been caught out and the member for Gladstone has been caught out because they know they have let the people of Wide Bay and Queensland down.

When it comes to regional development, it was also concerning to learn that out of the entire FTEs of the department only seven per cent of those employees are to do with regional development. I might also add, shockingly, that we were able to reveal to this minister the fact that the Office for Rural and Regional Queensland is not even a function of the Minister for Regional Development. It is actually a function under the Premier because the Premier does not trust this minister. This is a minister who has a complete PR role. That is what this estimates uncovered. It uncovered that there is no water security, no plan for future water infrastructure and no plan for regional development in Queensland.