




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Regional Queensland, Water Security

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (10.09 am): I have spoken to this House many times about the investment the Palaszczuk government is making in water security for regional Queenslanders. That includes close to \$1.9 billion committed to bulk water infrastructure across the state since 2015—projects like Rookwood Weir, the Haughton pipeline and the Mareeba-Dimbulah improvement project in North Queensland. Water security happens at a small scale as well—in the water treatment plants, reservoirs and water and sewerage systems of our regional towns and cities. In most cases these systems—which are vital to the health and prosperity of all Queenslanders—are operated and maintained by local councils.

Talking to mayors right across regional Queensland, I know that delivering these services for their constituents can put pressure on council budgets. The Palaszczuk government has listened to those concerns and we have acted. In this year's budget, the Palaszczuk government has allocated \$70 million to a new round of Building our Regions to support regional councils to maintain and improve their water and sewerage systems. With this funding, we are showing our commitment to supporting water security at every level of the water supply system.

The hugely successful Building our Regions program has a long history of delivering infrastructure projects, economic opportunities and jobs for our regional communities. To date, the first five rounds of this program have seen over \$348 million approved towards 271 projects across 67 regional councils. It has also leveraged over \$539 million in additional funding from other sources for a total capital expenditure of over \$887 million, supporting more than 2,700 construction jobs in regional Queensland. Building our Regions has already funded successful water supply improvements across our state, from Weipa to Warwick and Toowoomba to the Tablelands. The \$70 million we have committed will be available over three years for councils to target water and sewerage system improvements.

Just like the rest of the investments we are making as part of this year's budget, these projects will be an important part of delivering Queensland's plan for economic recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic. My department is now working to establish the systems for this round of Building our Regions grants and prepare guidelines for applicants, which will be released very soon. I look forward to updating the House on the delivery of this new round of Building our Regions in regional Queensland.