



Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Gladstone Area Water Board; Member for Nanango

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (2.20 pm): I do not usually get too fired up in this chamber about politics. I would prefer to work with everyone to deliver positive outcomes for all Queenslanders. After all, that is why Queensland voted us all into this place. I have proudly done that for the people of the Gladstone region since 2015 and as a proud minister in this government for over a year now. However, I will not stand by and be baselessly accused of rorts in the name of scoring cheap political points. Today I am calling out the member for Nanango for her blatant misleading of the House in the estimates hearings when she accused me of approving the funding for projects delivered by the Gladstone Area Water Board for some imagined personal or political benefit.

Firstly, I do not approve the funding for projects that are delivered by Gladstone Area Water Board. All government owned water utilities' budgets and project expenditures are determined by independent boards. Secondly, Gladstone Area Water Board's expenditure is also externally reviewed by the Queensland Competition Authority. If the member for Nanango had spent even a few minutes doing research instead of slinging mud, she would actually know that, but why let the truth get in the way of a bad story? Sadly, we know that details are not her strong point.

I am not just personally angry; I am also angry on behalf of all of the hardworking people who work at the Gladstone Area Water Board, who are planning and delivering infrastructure and water security projects that benefit the local communities in Gladstone and in Callide. The big question is why the member for Nanango believes that the people of Central Queensland do not deserve investment in key water infrastructure in Central Queensland. There are thousands of current industrial jobs, thousands of future jobs and tens of thousands of families that rely on projects like the new offsite storage facility in Gladstone, to name just one. Frankly, I have never heard anyone complain so much about regional communities getting vital infrastructure and the water that they need.

What makes me even angrier is that the member for Callide sits here and agrees with her. We already know that he does not support building flood shelters for his local constituents, because he even wrote to me to tell me that. However, it is his silence on issues that speaks louder than words ever could. By remaining silent and falling in line with the member for Nanango, he is telling the very people he is elected to represent that they do not deserve any investment in the region.

The voiceless member for Callide had every opportunity to ask me or any other minister questions about his electorate during the two weeks of estimates hearings, but we did not hear one word from him—not one. There were no questions about water infrastructure, no questions about the local manufacturers and no questions about local roads or schools or local medical services, all because he thinks staying quiet is the best way to get a free ride out of Callide and down to Canberra. I can tell the member for Callide right now that the people of Central Queensland will not stand up for someone who does not stand up for them. However, this is what we have come to expect from the members of what

remains of the Queensland National Party. I can assure the people in the communities around Awoonga Dam, Calliope and Biloela who are being sold out by the lazy LNP representatives that my office in Gladstone is open and I will support them anytime they need my support.

If the accusations were not so serious I could almost laugh about it and about how much of an own goal this is for the LNP. All of their complaining just highlights the fact that, by keeping our water utilities in public hands, the Palaszczuk Labor government is delivering for Central Queensland. It is because the Gladstone Area Water Board remains government owned that it invests money back into the local community to benefit locals rather than sending it off to the shareholders of a private owner. Eighty per cent of allocations are from industrial users in Gladstone giving back to the Gladstone region.

While the LNP will complain and make up stories, I will be working hard for the people of Gladstone, the people of Central Queensland and all regional Queenslanders. That is what they expect their elected officials to do, not sit on their hands in their electorate office.