



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

## ADJOURNMENT

### Paradise Dam

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (7.00 pm): Growers in the Burnett are reaching breaking point as the drought bites harder, rainfall decreases and the wet season fails us. With no rain falling in the Paradise Dam catchment area and the waste of 100,000 megalitres of water by Sunwater in 2019, the dire prediction is that Paradise Dam will be empty by June—that is right: empty.

Growers in the Bundaberg irrigation area are expecting historically low announced water allocations to be named by Sunwater in July—possibly as low as five per cent. Water becomes hugely expensive once allocations fall as low as five or 10 per cent because growers are still slugged with the fixed costs for their full allocation, even if they only get five per cent of that allocation. For one local avocado and macadamia grower in my electorate, a five per cent announced allocation means his 270 megalitre allocation will shrink to 13.5 megalitres. Such a low allocation is unworkable for that grower who faces the very real prospect of watching his avocado trees die before Christmas.

If this had arisen purely due to drought, I would accept it. However, knowing that the government's decision to release 100,000 megalitres out to sea has brought us to such a desperate situation is a very bitter pill to swallow. Preliminary calculations on the losses growers could incur due to the lowering of the Paradise Dam wall show that Sunwater's fixed charges will result in the actual water used by the grower costing as much as \$1,100 per megalitre—

**Mr Smith** interjected.

**Mr BENNETT:** For those opposite to interject when I am talking about such a serious incident shows how arrogant, out of touch and ridiculous Labor Party policies are in Queensland. That is a 1,000 per cent increase in water costs. How would the average motorist feel if tomorrow morning they pulled into a servo and found that the fuel price had jumped from \$1.40 per litre to \$14 per litre? They would not stand for it. It is like asking an average household to exist on five per cent of its normal grocery budget.

This Labor government's refusal to guarantee that the Bundaberg irrigation scheme will be returned to its original capacity will strip \$2.4 billion and thousands of jobs out of the region's economy. The loudmouth from Bundaberg should take an interest in the impact on our economy.

**Mr SMITH:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and ask the member to withdraw.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Lui): Member for Burnett?

**Mr BENNETT:** I withdraw. The farmers of Bundaberg have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into producing food and they deserve better. The taxpayers of Queensland, who rely on fresh, clean and green food, deserve better. The losses to Bundaberg farmers will be in the billions; the losses

to the state of Queensland will be much greater. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I again call on this state government to give us some answers, stop the delays and commit to restoring water security to Paradise Dam.

Today the Minister for Water stood in this place and tried to spin a yarn to the people of the region about what the options paper will mean for Paradise Dam. I predict publicly that the options paper will suggest that the cost of raising the wall of Paradise Dam will have so many zeroes on it that it will never happen because let's face it: Labor never wanted the Paradise Dam and they will never support the farmers of Bundaberg or reinstate the wall at Paradise Dam. Mark my words.