




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disaster Preparedness, Dam Water Releases

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (10.31 am): We are all aware of the devastating impact that extreme weather can have on all of our lives, and with the Bureau of Meteorology forecasting another La Nina event for the upcoming summer, we know that preparing for potential flood events is crucial. We have already heard it from the Premier this morning, but let me detail why the temporary full-supply level of Wivenhoe Dam will be lowered. I have taken advice and information from meteorologists, scientists, dam safety engineers, the dam safety regulator and environmental experts as we plan appropriate steps for the wet season ahead.

Under the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008, the minister must consider a range of important factors in declaring a temporary full-supply level for the dam. These factors include expert advice, flood mitigation considerations, impacts on water security and the public interest. Considering the advice and weighing up these very important factors, I have determined in accordance with the legislation that the temporary full-supply level for Wivenhoe Dam will be set at 80 per cent. This means that from this Saturday Seqwater will begin controlled releases over the next two weeks until we reach that 80 per cent level in the dam. The new temporary full-supply level balances water security for the region and frees up about 116,000 megalitres of additional flood storage in the catchment, which is around 50,000 Olympic swimming pools. This decision does not alter the flood manual and the controlled releases will be made in accordance with the manual.

This is not a decision I have taken lightly. We saw in February that extreme weather events can be unpredictable, and keeping Queenslanders safe is at the top of my priority list. We want sufficient flood mitigation capacity in the dam to prepare South-East Queenslanders as much as possible should there be significant inflows into the Wivenhoe Dam catchment. It was confirmed in the IGEM report that during the February-March flood event, Wivenhoe Dam did its job, holding back four Sydney Harbours worth of water. Seqwater will be providing regular updates to councils and the community before releases which commence this Saturday and over the duration of the two-week release period.

The Queensland government is giving eligible South-East Queensland households a \$55 discount on their water bills to coincide with the water releases over the next two weeks. Those in eligible areas will have the discount applied automatically to their quarterly water bills. My department will be working closely with the five water service providers in South-East Queensland to support them in being ready to apply these discounts to bills.

We are preparing now to be in the best position to deal with whatever Mother Nature may throw at us this wet season. We cannot predict the future, but we can make sure that we are well prepared for what lies ahead in this state.