




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Far North Queensland, Water Infrastructure

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (10.03 am): The Palaszczuk Labor government has invested \$4.5 billion in water infrastructure since 2015, creating some 2,940 construction jobs. This investment drives water security, it helps councils deliver vital water projects in their communities and it also helps drive economic growth right across Queensland.

Cairns is a growing community and I know that the council is working hard to deliver that infrastructure, and the Palaszczuk Labor government will be with the council every step of the way under that program. We have committed \$107.5 million for the Cairns Regional Council's water security, and so has the federal government. That is right: in Tuesday night's federal budget, the federal funding for the Cairns Water Security project was locked in. We are backing urban water security and we are supporting our irrigators in Queensland too. On the Tablelands, which is such an important food bowl, we all know how vital water is for the ag sector.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, I would ask you to pause there. Members of the opposition, the minister is giving a factual ministerial statement and is not being provocative. I would ask you to hear the statement in silence. There will be plenty of opportunities during question time and later today to hold the government to account.

Mr BUTCHER: It is great to see that the \$32.5 million investment in the Mareeba-Dimbulah water efficiency program has now finished. This has been a great partnership, with funding from SunWater, the federal government and the Queensland state government. This is a game-changing project that will save more than 8,300 megalitres of high-priority valued water. This project will also modernise that infrastructure and improve the reliability to Tablelands growers.

The Palaszczuk Labor government wants to see the agriculture sector continue to grow on the Tablelands and right across Far North Queensland. We have invested a total of \$9 million in regional water assessments in the Bundaberg-Burnett, the southern Darling Downs and up here in the Tablelands. The ag sector is a major economic driver in the Far North and employs around 8,800 people. The Tablelands Regional Water Assessment is about those long-term projects which will unlock more jobs and investment over a longer term. Once complete, this assessment will be a road map that sets out how existing infrastructure, new infrastructure and non-infrastructure solutions can be used to maximise water supply and drive economic growth.

On the topic of the Tablelands, I am pleased to announce that the latest round of the Building our Regions funding for the Tablelands Regional Council will deliver a demand management plan as well as the Ravenshoe Water Quality Improvement Plan. The Cairns and Far North Queensland community can always count on the Palaszczuk Labor government to continue to deliver water infrastructure for its communities.