



Speech By  
**Hon. Glenn Butcher**


**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 October 2023

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Water Security**

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (9.53 am): South-East Queensland has a safe and secure water supply grid, thanks to the foresight of Labor governments in the past and now. We can transport water around the region to where it is needed most, particularly when variable rainfall leaves some catchments with more water than others. We saw that during the most recent drought, which ran from 2015 and ended in the 2022 flood event. It was one year shorter than the millennial drought, yet the grid only dropped to around 55 per cent and water restrictions were not necessary after that time.

We know that people want to move to Queensland and we also know that climate change will continue to challenge us here in Queensland. That is why it is important that we continue to plan for future growth. Here in South-East Queensland, our publicly owned water entity, Seqwater, is responsible for providing safe, reliable and affordable drinking water. Seqwater's plan for meeting these important needs is set out in our Water Security Program. It is a 30-year plan that considers population growth, projected rainfall and climate change to determine what new water infrastructure is needed and when we will need it. Seqwater's updated program proposes to connect Wyaralong Dam, north-west of Beaudesert, to the grid and expand the existing Gold Coast Desalination Plant by 2033.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left will cease their interjections. Member for Coomera, you started it all. Be careful.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Considering the dual challenges of creating a resilient water supply and meeting demands from population growth here in Queensland, Seqwater will also undertake a detailed business case for a new desalination plant in South-East Queensland. While Seqwater's modelling shows that this proposed new asset is not needed until the mid-2030s, we know that it is important to start planning for it now. More people want to call South-East Queensland home, so it is important that we continue to deliver the infrastructure that is needed to support this great Queensland lifestyle.

Unlike water from dams and purified recycled water, desalination water is pumped directly into the water grid. During the 2022 flood event when our main water treatment plants were impacted by debris and turbidity, the Gold Coast Desalination Plant was ramped up to supplement the grid so water supply was not interrupted during that time. We also know that, because of climate change, we lose hundreds of thousands of megalitres of water off our dams each year through evaporation. Climate-resilient assets like desalination therefore deliver for Queenslanders during floods, droughts and everything in between. The Gold Coast Desalination Plant is providing water to the grid right now, and purified recycled water is being used by industry right now. Seqwater is investigating further uses for purified recycled water, including for agriculture and emerging industries like hydrogen. All of this reduces the drawdown on Wivenhoe Dam here in South-East Queensland. Whether it is—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Nanango is warned under the standing orders.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Whether it is the \$5.2 billion in water infrastructure already delivered by the Palaszczuk Labor government since 2015 or the planning work that is underway right across the state, Queenslanders can be certain that this government will deliver infrastructure needed not only now but also into the future.