




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2023

STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.24 pm): I rise to speak to the State Development and Regional Industries Committee report No. 33, *Examination of Auditor-General Report No. 9: 2021-22—Regulating dam safety*. In the electorate of Condamine, there are three dams either wholly in or nearby, that being Perseverance, Cressbrook and Cooby dams. I think we would all agree that our water storage facilities need to be structurally sound and able to withstand extreme weather events that can and do come after high rainfall events. We have seen a number of these flooding events in recent times.

Two of the dams that supply the City of Toowoomba and surrounds have been identified as needing upgrades to their spillways. These are Cressbrook and Cooby dams. These upgrades are to be completed by 2025, which means works will need to be underway by at least next April. The work at Cressbrook alone will cost \$300 million. This will have a massive impact on the budget of the Toowoomba Regional Council. At the end of this spend, it will not mean one more litre of water will be stored or available for the Toowoomba Regional Council; they will literally be back to where they started. In fact, they could be worse off, as to do this work they need to discharge 20 per cent of the storage at a time when we are told we are entering into an El Nino period. At this stage, I have not heard the cost of Cooby Dam, but it will be significant and will also need the water level to be reduced to undertake the works.

There are significant challenges in conducting these works and also on Toowoomba's short-term water supply, let alone the cost. This will have a long-term impact on the finances of the council if they are left to go it alone with this project. It will mean that most of the programs that council have planned to be undertaken over the next five years will need to be either severely reduced or cancelled. This would mean that the ratepayers who live in the regions, and do not rely on town water, will have their projects cut and will have no benefit from the \$300 million spend. This in turn means that those ratepayers will have to put up with the rough roads, lack of drainage and flood reduction works, among many other projects, because of the financial impact from these works.

Toowoomba Regional Council should not have to shoulder this massive cost alone. In actual fact, if Cressbrook Dam were to spill and go downstream, it would be the town of Toogoolawah that would be impacted, which is in the Somerset Regional Council. Cressbrook is right on the edge of the Toowoomba Regional Council boundary, so it will be another council which will be in danger of being flooded.

I am aware that some conversations have begun with the state government and more detailed ones to follow when a detailed business case has been completed or upgraded. I would encourage the relevant minister to show some understanding of the implications for councils and step up with some funding so the ratepayers are not left with the burden. Both state and federal governments will have to come to the party with this project, especially when there are councils like Toowoomba which have two dam upgrades identified which must be completed by 2025. We need the funding and even perhaps a

bit of rescheduling of some of those works. For a region like Toowoomba, given there was \$220 million spent on a quarantine facility that does not get used, we really would like to see some money come into the region for a project like this which is about safety.