



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Burnett Electorate, Flood Mitigation**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (2.19 pm): Timing is ironic, isn't not? I want to follow on from the member for Warrego's discussions about flood mitigation. Historically, the Burnett River catchment experiences a major flood every 19 years. With the 2013 flood still in the back of our minds, which resulted in the largest evacuation event in Australia's history involving some 5,000 persons, I think it is relevant that we talk about the state and federal governments' proposed levee on the south bank of the Burnett River. It is forecast that it will protect primary businesses, the employment base of east Bundaberg, and about 600 properties, but it does not afford flood protection for everyone else, particularly those in north Bundaberg.

To date, the state government has spent \$43 million since the 2013 GHD report, the Jacobs report of 2016 and now the CDM Smith report of 2019, which the government has had for nearly five years and has been rereleased earlier this year. It gives me the opportunity to talk about an examination of the 770-page document and some of the concerns we want to put on the record. I believe we still have to look at what flood mitigation might look like. River naturalisation is a preferred option that, of course, would save hundreds of millions of dollars.

In a comparison of the 2013 GHD report and the revised CDM Smith report, there are issues. A climate change assessment was part of the GHD proposal and that has been removed. No climate change risk management factor has been allowed for the height of the wall. By contrast, a 200-year flood recommendation by GHD, plus another 600 millimetres extra height to prevent the level from overtopping, has also been taken out of the new proposal. Engineers and scientists agree that a one per cent future predictor of flood heights should be used in calculating the levee height, leaving the community with a one-metre difference.

For over a decade, the state government has promised boots on the ground and now defines the new project as an action plan to determine how best to reduce flood risk and improve the safety of the community. There is no expressed intention by the state government to address life and property risks in other areas except by evacuation routes and evacuation orders. Clearly, accepting the proposal for the flood levee height based on only a 100-year flood criteria leaves our community exposed.

A cause of concern is the flood levee's proposed location. The report says that levees should be located in areas of low velocity. Of course, anyone who was around in those times will know that at that part of the river it was a high-velocity flood. I have asked questions about the criteria, we have been thwarted in every way from getting the flood modelling and questions on notice have never been answered. I want to talk about the ongoing maintenance costs to the people and ratepayers of Bundaberg, which have not been discussed in this report. The costings talk about a \$100 million or \$84 million build. The question is: what is the \$174 million going to be used for? When we talk about what this means for the people of Bundaberg, as I said before, we have to be cognisant of the river naturalisation option.

If the people of Bundaberg do have concerns, a river consultation process is starting on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at the School of Arts in Bourbong Street. I encourage everyone to go along, put their thoughts before the government and let's get this right.