



Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2025

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL


Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee, Report

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): The question is—

That the report of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee be adopted.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.49 pm): I rise with pride to speak to the committee report that is before us. I would like to, first of all, start on the matter of Emu Swamp Dam which the opposition made much of in the course—

Mr Head: Hear, hear!

Mr LISTER: I take that acknowledgement from my good friend the member for Callide, because he understands the importance of water in our communities. This is no laughing matter. I saw, to great disappointment, that the opposition members of the committee who have affixed their signatures to a statement of reservation which misrepresented me and falsely claimed that I had sought, without avail, an answer from the Minister for Water on how the project would proceed and where the funds are. That is a very disappointing thing to see. It is quite shameful, in fact. I would invite the members of the committee under whose signature that statement was published to withdraw that when their turn comes to speak in the course of this debate. I am particularly talking about the member for Lytton who I see is in the chamber. I think it is very important that I not be misrepresented on that matter because Emu Swamp Dam is not a concept, it is not a glib catchphrase to be bounced around in this chamber; it is a mechanism by which the people of the Granite Belt went without water, except that which could be trucked up the hill from Warwick, for 18 months.

I saw my community, the one in which I actually live in Southern Downs, amongst the many communities I am privileged to represent, do it extremely tough. It was not just a question of not enough water; it meant that for those who live outside of the town, which is about half of the population of the Granite Belt area, who rely on the ability to go into town to pump water from a standpoint into the back of their utes so they would have drinking water at home, that got cut off.

The tourist industry on the Granite Belt suffered grievously because well-meaning Queenslanders felt it would be best not to travel to Stanthorpe because 'we know they are having trouble with water at the moment'.

The drought was extremely difficult for the horticultural industry, which is the lifeblood of the community of Stanthorpe and the Granite Belt which employs so many people and which feeds us and provides economic and food security for the community.

Emu Swamp Dam—and this is something which the members of the opposition disingenuously omitted from their statement of reservations—has not proceeded because the government, which they supported—the former Labor government—in 2022 advised the federal Labor government to withdraw the \$200 million-odd funding for Emu Swamp Dam; ditto for Hells Gate Dam and ditto for Urannah Dam. Those members who were present at the time will remember the colourful speech I gave in this place, excoriating the Labor Party. Well, I am here to do it again because, for the Labor Party to make light and try to score political points off the water disadvantage that their successive governments imposed on the communities that I represent is nothing short of disgraceful.

I know that, unlike the former Labor government, the Crisafulli LNP government takes water security seriously. Not only does it actually build stuff, it does not pay triple what it should and it listens to the communities who need the water.

I might just say, on the topic of water, while the minister is in the chamber here, I want to thank the minister for the government's increase in funding to river improvement trusts of which there are two in my electorate of Southern Downs. They were facing the loss of funding because the former Labor government had not funded them over the forward estimates. When we talk about water and support of this government for communities relating to water, there is no comparison. Labor builds shoddy dams. If they build dams, they have to be pulled down, or they do not build dams at all. My community will never be deluded into thinking that the Labor government have been their friend. They had years and years to build Emu Swamp Dam.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr LISTER: I heard the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers. I see her laughing. She thinks it is a funny matter. It is not. I ask the members of that committee—

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr LISTER: I am not taking your interjections, member for Pine Rivers. I invite those members of the Labor Party who signed the statement of reservations in this report to denounce in their contributions what they said, to retract the false accusation that they made in there, and I will look very much forward to seeing that occur during the course of this debate.