




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

North Queensland, Weather Events; Water Infrastructure

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.56 pm): I wish to make reference to the devastating flood that we experienced in North Queensland and turn our attention to how these things can be mitigated not just through roads and bridges but also through the building of dams and diversions. Hells Gates and the revised Bradfield scheme would see major diversions from the upper Tully, Herbert and Burdekin rivers, which was always a strong basis for its viability. Its selling point was that it would divert waters from the devastating floods that we always get in that high rainfall area and take them out to the dry inland.

I have some fun facts for honourable members. Inland Australia covers 82 per cent of the land mass, has 74 per cent of Australia's water and has three per cent of the population. Coastal Australia, with only 18 per cent of the land mass, has only 26 per cent of the water and 97 per cent of the population. Surely at some point in our history we need to stand back and say, 'What are we doing here?' Every other country in the world has looked at it and said, 'Let's deploy our resources to repopulate these other areas.' America did a fantastic job of it. Through diversions we could create wealth and wealth follows these things. If the government wants to pay for its 50-cent fares and Olympic stadiums, this is how to do it: you create industry. That is what Queensland did, but we ran to a grinding halt about 30 years ago.

Dad got money for a feasibility study for the Bradfield scheme. It was about \$50 million but it was all burnt up because bureaucrats and the departments love knocking these types of proposals on the head. Dad also got \$30 million for Big Rocks dam. That was burnt up by bureaucrats and none of them wanted to see it built. Big Rocks Weir is a weir above an old weir. It is a weir above a 100-year-old weir. We were told there are all these environmental and Indigenous impacts that mean it cannot possibly be built. It would be a 10,000-megalitre weir above an old weir. It is ridiculous. Then there is HIPCo dam at Hughenden. There are 1,000 kilometres of the Flinders River and there are only two flow meters on it, but no-one wants to let us take any water out of it. Only about one or two per cent of the average annual flow gets to be taken out. Then when we go to build a water storage, they will give a thousand reasons we cannot do it. These departments, especially the water department, just want to kill everything.

Well-meaning politicians might want to give directions and give money for it, but it needs to be driven. We need to mitigate against these floods and at the same time create wealth down here. It will not make my public transport cheaper in Mount Isa or give me a better sports stadium, but it will help create wealth for all of you here so you pay for your hospitals and your 50-cent fares. However, you have to start out there and build these fundamentals of industry. If we do not concentrate on that in a strategic way, I can assure honourable members that our future does not look good.