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Labor not interested in Wivenhoe 'rethink'

October 6th, 2010

Wivenhoe Dam's true capacity was double that being claimed by the Bligh government and better management was needed to stop further waste of taxpayers' money and soaring water bills for southeast Queenslanders, the State Opposition told Parliament today.

LNP water spokesman Jeff Seeney said government claims that Wivenhoe was 100 per cent full and water had to be released were misleading because at '100 per cent capacity' the dam was less than half full.

Mr Seeney said the water crisis was caused by the long-term Labor government's failure to plan – delivering consumers inflated water bills and water restrictions that still applied while water was being released from Wivenhoe.

"Isn't this release of water from Wivenhoe when it's holding only 40 per cent of its available capacity a clear indication the Government has learnt nothing from the water crisis and is still failing to plan for the next inevitable drought," Mr Seeney asked Minister Stephen Robertson.

Mr Seeney said the Minister wasn't interested in telling the people of southeast Queensland that the true capacity of Wivenhoe was 2.6 megalitres.

"The government states the dam is 'full' at 1.15 million megalitres, but its total capacity is 2.6 million megalitres."

Mr Seeney said a 2005 government report showed using just 2 metres extra of Wivenhoe's storage would add an extra 228,000 megalitres of water and provide an extra 'no fail' yield of 31,000 megalitres a year to SEQ's water supply – equivalent to the total annual yield from a properly functioning Tugun desal plant.

Built in the late 1970s in response to the 1974 floods that devastated Brisbane, Wivenhoe was constructed to hold not just a large water supply, but also act as a buffer to help to manage future floods.

Mr Seeney said it was time to review management policy so more of the dam could be used for water storage to reduce chances of another water crisis.

"Obviously the dam needs to maintain the flood buffer for Brisbane. But we need to determine whether the balance that was struck in the early 1980s remains appropriate for the situation today."