



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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MOTION: SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND WATER SUPPLY

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (6.06 pm): In joining this evening's 5.30 debate, I would like to commend the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, for this motion that condemns this Bligh government's incompetence and mismanagement of South-East Queensland's water supply. We have heard from honourable members from this side of the House about failed project after failed project. Government members are completely blind to the truth. They are so terrified of losing their seats at the next state election that they will say anything, as we have just heard from the honourable member for Broadwater. The amendment to the motion is further proof that they are in total denial.

It is no laughing matter that residents who are faced with soaring water bills are at the end of their tether—a point lost on those opposite. South-East Queensland ratepayers are fed up with the Bligh Labor government's buck-passing and incompetence in managing their water supply, especially when Gold Coasters have been such dedicated water warriors—a point lost on the honourable member for Broadwater.

But how did we get into this situation? The Beattie state government, after failing to act during a decade-long period of dwindling water supplies in South-East Queensland, hastily set about trying to avert the impending crisis in 2006. Desperate, knee-jerk, rushed decisions took precedence over accountability and affordability. Four pieces of water reform legislation have been debated in this House in four years. Councils were forced to sell their water assets to the state for peanuts and so began the political toing-and-froing of our most precious commodity at the expense of the consumer.

How the members opposite can be proud of the \$9 billion water grid shows just how delusional they have become. Considering the incomprehensible cost and unacceptable delays that are the hallmarks of this infrastructure spend of mammoth proportions, one would think that they would be embarrassed when confronted with the frightening list of failures that are associated with it. But quite the opposite is true. Despite costing more than \$1 billion and with much publicity, bells and whistles from the Premier, who was a frequent visitor, the Tugun desalination plant—a huge piece of infrastructure—is still not fully operational. It has been labelled many things, from a rust bucket to a lemon and some things that I cannot say in this House. Every excuse except 'Anna ate my homework' has been given as faulty parts and defects continue to hold up satisfactory completion of this project.

The Premier, her minister and her government would have us believe that this is a successfully completed project, even though they do not have the courage to sign off and take it over. Despite milking this for every hard-hat media opportunity during 2007-08, the Premier has not been within cooee of the site since calling the election in February 2009. In 2008, when water pressure was tested, pipes in nearby Kitchener Street burst opening the road up as though a bomb had exploded. This was followed by an open day in November so that people could taste first water, but the Premier tried to pass this off as the opening of the plant. As several thousand visitors flocked to this cruel media stunt by the Premier little did they realise the footy oval they were walking on was sinking. Since construction began the Tugun Football Club is subsiding quickly. Dressing rooms have had to be demolished, crater-like holes have opened up in the grounds, concrete footings have separated and the oval fence and bolted seats have buckled due to ground movement.

Tugun residents have had enough dirt, noise, disruption and disrespect. Other suburbs where water pipes were laid are complaining about how the project has damaged their homes. These decent and trusting people have put up with plenty since 2006 and just wanted a guarantee that their neighbourhoods would be returned to the state that they were prior to construction and that the desalination plant would run efficiently.

It has been almost two years since the Premier fooled Queenslanders with her phony opening in November 2008. The deadline for the January 2009 grand opening was missed due to rust found in pipes. But again the people of Queensland and the Gold Coast were being duped. While the government says that the plant has been operating for the past 18 months, it has refused to take ownership. A plethora of problems, including rusty pipes, faulty parts, replacement of tanks, diffuser heads and even a runaway barge landing itself on the beach at Tugun, have all occurred in a mere 18 months. These parts were designed to last 100 years.

Queenslanders, particularly on the Gold Coast in my Currumbin electorate, have been doing the right thing with water throughout this drought. I challenge the Premier and the minister to come down to Tugun and tell them that they have got value for money; look them in the eye and tell them the truth. To know what is going on takes sense; to know what to do about it takes wisdom. Labor has neither.