




Speech By
Hon. Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Labor Government, Water Infrastructure Costs

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.37 am): The previous Labor government failed in a whole range of public administration, but there was no greater failure than the delivery of crucial infrastructure that Queenslanders will need for the future.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The Bligh and Beattie Labor governments wasted billions of dollars because they did not plan properly, and the members who sit over there and interject are the same people who sat around the cabinet table and made the decisions to waste those billions of dollars. They built infrastructure in the wrong places at the wrong time and for the wrong purpose, and there is no greater example of that than the Seqwater grid—the grid that was much trumpeted by Peter Beattie, the member for Mackay and the member for Inala and every other minister in the cabinet at that time as one of their government's greatest achievements. How often did we hear them in this place every morning the parliament sat standing up talking about future-proofing Queensland? What they did, in effect, was load Queenslanders up with debt—debt that is now a black cloud over the future of every Queenslanders. That was their idea of future-proofing Queensland.

The actions of that government ensured that the water bills Queenslanders will have to pay for the next generation are significantly higher than they should have been, and there is nothing that anyone can do about that. It is the responsibility and the fault of the Beattie and Bligh Labor governments and the members who now sit in opposition. What is even more galling is that \$9 billion that was spent is not producing a single benefit to the people of Queensland. The wastewater plants stand useless and unused. The western corridor pipeline is just wasted money. The desalination plant is mothballed. Billions of dollars of infrastructure are useless and unused because they were not planned properly and were built in a panic.

It became the subject of debate in this House over a long period of time. We became very familiar with terms like 'tender by invoice', where the tender process was just 'send in your invoice'. We became very familiar with terms like 'do it and charge me', which was the government's financial management plan—'Just do it and charge us'. That was the sort of management that was applied—'tender by invoice' and 'do it and charge'—and we talked about those things in this parliament over a number of months as the absurdity of their management of the water grid was revealed to all Queenslanders.

There was a total lack of planning by Labor resulting in a panicked response when levels in the Wivenhoe and Somerset dams started to fall. It revealed their total lack of planning for the future water supply for the people of South-East Queensland. There was panic from a government that had no other response but to waste huge amounts of taxpayers' dollars—dollars borrowed on behalf of taxpayers, all of which now have to be paid back by taxpayers.

A significant part of the black cloud of debt that hangs over Queensland is due to poor planning and infrastructure and the downright stupidity of the former Labor government, when they undertook infrastructure spending that was in the wrong place at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. The two white elephants—the \$2.6 billion recycled water pipeline that produces not one drop of water and the \$1.2 billion white elephant Gold Coast desalination plant—are costing Queenslanders \$150 million a year in interest payments and \$33 million a year in care and maintenance costs, and Queenslanders are getting nothing for that money. I repeat: \$150 million a year and getting nothing for it, and \$33 million just to keep up the care and maintenance.

Our government in contrast is determined to plan for the future infrastructure needs of Queensland. We are about building infrastructure ahead of a critical need developing for that essential infrastructure. The infrastructure that we are planning to build will ensure that Queenslanders have enough water, that Queenslanders have proper roads, that Queenslanders have quality schools and that Queenslanders have world-class hospitals. This government is working to clean up Labor's misguided water mess which left a trail of more than \$10 billion in Seqwater debt. We promised better planning and infrastructure, and we are delivering for Queenslanders in the future.