



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 19 September 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Kinchant Dam

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.55 pm): I rise to inform the House of a 10-year battle that is being fought with the Queensland government by the Barfield family west of Mackay. Salt intrusion on the western side of their property has had a huge impact on the sugar cane the Barfields grow and they are facing ongoing and increasing financial losses. At their own expense the Barfields engaged an independent consultant to examine the cause of the damage and the outcome identified leaching from the nearby Kinchant Dam. I have witnessed the damage myself and there is clear drone footage of the damage caused to the Barfields' property.

When a highly respected, highly experienced independent entity like Australasian Groundwater and Environmental Consultants concludes that a state government owned dam is causing financial loss, one would think that the government would take action. Unfortunately this is not the case. SunWater has a full copy of the consultant's report and, according to the minister, the Barfields have actively engaged to find a resolution. However, instead of engaging with the Barfields this issue is turning into a legal battle. Whilst SunWater is currently undertaking drainage works on its land to address rising groundwater, it is yet to admit that Kinchant Dam is causing the Barfields' losses. I, along with canegrowers' representatives, have witnessed firsthand saline water inundating the new drainage works prior to sealing so there is no question as to what is causing the damage to the Barfields' property.

It is not just their property that is being affected, bushland beside the Kinchant Dam is also being impacted. It is clear that we have yet another example of this government's failings when it comes to dams. After receiving the independent consultant's work what did SunWater do? They did a desktop review. Did they visit the Barfields? No. When this was brought to the attention of the minister, did he visit the Barfields? No.

Queensland needs more dams, but we also need a government that maintains our dams properly and this is not happening as this case clearly illustrates. The minister needs to understand that the land that the Barfields have farmed since before the dam was built is now virtually worthless and their ongoing economic losses continue to increase. The minister must ensure that whatever works are needed at the dam to address this situation are undertaken as a matter of urgency. We need a solution, not a legal battle. Ten years of damage to the Barfields' property and the bushland surrounding the dam is too much and the minister must act.

Queensland is built on the back of hardworking men and women like the Barfields, people who deserve a fair go. Queenslanders will not stand by while families suffer due to government inaction. Minister, the time to act is now to sort this issue out before any further damage is done.