

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Deputy Premier

The Hon Jeff Seeney MP

<<<CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY>>>

Mine Water releases

Madam Speaker,

Last November I announced this government would initiate a pilot release of legacy mine water from BHP-Mitsubishi Alliance mines in central Queensland during the then coming wet season.

It was the first step to develop a long-term solution to address the problem of mine water and to protect the water quality in the Fitzroy Basin catchment.

The floods of recent years have left the mines of central Queensland with a major problem – it must be addressed – it should have been addressed immediately it became apparent.

Unfortunately it wasn't - the previous Labor Government failed totally to take any action.

This government has not shirked that responsibility.

I travelled to Rockhampton at the time to explain our plans to the local community – particularly members of the Rockhampton Regional Council and the Fitzroy Basin Water Quality Advisory Group.

Our pilot release scheme should provide us with the information to design a considered management system to enable mines to deal with disposal of excess water on a continuing basis.

We need a solution that is firmly based on science, one that establishes a clear set of principles for releasing water from the coal mines into the river system.

Our view is that we can establish a salinity trading system in the Fitzroy Basin similar to the model that exists in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales.

The Hunter scheme is based on releases of mine water when the river flow can absorb a salt load without impacting on the environment.

The Australia Day deluge in central Queensland provided the opportunity for us to initiate the pilot release into the Fitzroy Basin.

The releases were heavily monitored to provide us with the data to make assessments about the releases and their impact – assessments that were not possible in the past because of our predecessor's failure to deal with this problem.

Detailed water quality monitoring has been undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines during the flood event.

This is independent of and additional to the rigorous water quality monitoring and reporting requirements imposed on the mines.

Information from the flood event is currently being analysed.

By the time the flood started to recede at Rockhampton, about 5.5 thousand gigalitres had flowed out of the Fitzroy River.

In comparison, the volume of water released from all Fitzroy Basin mines during the flood event was approximately 10 gigalitres or 0.19 per cent of the total flow.

Throughout the event the electrical conductivity at all monitoring sites was in the normal range for the Fitzroy and well below cease release trigger levels, which were put in place to ensure the protection of water quality for irrigation, drinking and ecosystem health.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that the results of this analysis will demonstrate that claims being made of environmental impacts associated with the mine water releases are not based on sound scientific evidence and are nothing more than a scare campaign.

These claims have been aimed at doing nothing more than alarming the people of the Fitzroy Basin.

Our Government will act responsibly to address this issue that was totally ignored by the former government, but is critical to the Queensland economy.