



Hon Henry Palaszczuk MP
Member for Inala



**Minister for Natural Resources
and Mines**

CTS 07940/05

-- 6 JAN 2006

Mr N J Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear ~~Mr~~ *Neil* Laurie

I refer to your letter of 26 October 2005 to the Hon Desley Boyle MP enclosing a copy of Petition No. 528-05 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, which the Minister forwarded on to me on 12 December 2005.

The Petition draws to the attention of the House that the Toowoomba City Council proposes to introduce recycled sewage water into the State's water supply for integration into the drinking water supply. The petitioners requested the House to take all steps to: ensure that treated sewage wastewater is not, now, or in the future, inserted into any of the State's rivers, dams or waterways; ensure that treated sewage wastewater is not inserted either directly or indirectly into the State's drinking water mains or pipelines; cancel any and all previously made decisions or plans that would introduce treated sewage wastewater into the State's water supply; ensure that the direct reuse of treated sewage Wastewater Demonstration Plant at Pine Rivers is not introduced into the State's water supply and is kept separate for non-drinking purposes; and vote to veto Toowoomba City Council's proposal to introduce treated sewage wastewater into Cooby Dam as outlined in Toowoomba Water Futures Project and intended by Council to be included in the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2005-2026.

As all Queenslanders are aware, much of Queensland, and especially the south east corner, is currently experiencing an extreme drought with some of our major dam storage levels at around 34 per cent. Traditionally, the response to water shortages has been to construct more storage facilities. However, in many parts of the state, including those areas expected to experience ongoing population growth, the opportunities for additional large-scale cost effective storages are relatively limited. To ensure future water supply needs are met, it is necessary to look beyond traditional sources, such as dams, and consider a range of water supply options.

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To this end, the Queensland Government is committed to investigate all options for improving the security of the State's water supplies. This includes improved utilisation of existing supplies through better water use efficiency, recycling, new storages where viable, and investigating options such as desalination and reuse.

The options for future water supplies in South East Queensland are being fully examined as part of the South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy and other investigations. These options include better demand management, re-commissioning old dams, some new storage, recycling for major industrial users, more use of underground aquifers and investigation of alternative sources such as desalination.

In the case of Toowoomba, if the current drought persists and no additional water sources are found, the city may run out of water by October 2007. Consequently, to overcome this severe water shortage the Toowoomba City Council developed the Toowoomba Water Futures proposal. This proposal involves, in part, treating recycled water to a very pure quality (purer than drinking water) before it is placed into Cooby Dam to supplement existing water supplies.

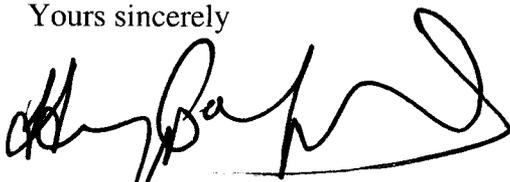
A Queensland Government review of water supply options considered by Toowoomba City Council confirmed that none of the alternative proposals warranted further more detailed assessment as they failed to adequately secure the city's supply needs.

Given that Toowoomba's reliable long-term alternative supply options are severely limited, the Government has indicated that it is prepared to support the initiative of the Toowoomba City Council to develop an indirect recycling facility as part of its total water supply strategy. Council will need to demonstrate that any use of recycled water is safe, reliable, economic and environmentally acceptable.

Enhancing existing water supplies through indirect potable recycling is being contemplated in many locations. For example, Goulburn City Council in New South Wales is seeking funding from the Australian Government Water Fund for a project proposing to pipe highly treated recycled water into its dam catchment to mix with current water supplies. Importantly, potable water recycling is currently undertaken by other countries without adverse affects. For instance, Singapore has a large-scale recycling scheme where a small proportion of the recycled water is returned to drinking reservoirs and the balance supplied to industry.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henry Palaszczuk', written over a horizontal line.

HENRY PALASZCZUK MP