




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 4 September 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Healthy Waterways

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (7.21 pm): The most basic of essential needs for our mental and physical health, our economy and our ability to sustain is also what is irreplaceable: clean water, clean air and unpolluted soil. Yet why is it that when concerns are raised about the contamination of any of these we take so long to take action before they escalate to major incidents?

It has been reported that residents around Walsh River and Jamie Creek, south-west of Cairns, can no longer drink, swim in or use that water due to contamination from a copper mine. How did it come to this? Even those downstream who are dependent on this water for livestock and crops have been impacted. Could this have been avoided given the first major pollution event at this site occurred in 2012, six years ago? These questions raise further questions, including how many other similar issues have been raised and not addressed across Queensland that directly impact our very basics of clean water and soil? Are there further major environmental incidents waiting to happen?

This topic is not raised to condemn or blame; it is to highlight an area where we can, and need to, improve our processes, including response times. We have many agencies, departments, not-for-profits and programs including the Healthy Waterways partnerships that are committed to ensuring that our waterways remain pollution free. We have rules, regulations, legislation, policy and a raft of mechanisms to monitor and manage within a framework. However, there must be a gap in which these major incidents can occur, and we need to identify these and address them as a matter of urgency. For example, is our Healthy Waterways program broad enough? Currently, there are limitations as to what is tested and monitored under this program, including a lack of testing for chemicals that are of concern to communities.

The Noosa River is my electorate's lifeline, providing for our economy, lifestyle and environmental health. Concerns have been raised by residents regarding the use of specific chemicals historically and the ongoing effect these may have on the river and its surrounds. The Noosa fish task force was set up in 2009 to investigate a range of fish health problems at a local fish hatchery, with a final report released in 2011. In 2018 a number of recommendations that came from this investigation are yet to be implemented, with no further testing or monitoring for specific chemicals that could alleviate the concerns and questions about our river health.

Let's be proactive to develop processes and resources to enable quick response times to concerns that assess, test and address. Solution based processes are needed to mitigate, prevent and circumnavigate contamination to protect the most essential components that are vital to our very existence: clean air, water and soil. Prevention and early intervention make good economic sense because what are the costs to Queenslanders, in dollars and health, of cleaning up after major contaminations or living with the aftermath?