



---

## INNISFAIL ADVOCATE COLUMN FOR 10.2.10

---

**Date: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

**For immediate release**

### **WATER MORATORIUM CREATES HUGE UNCERTAINTY**

Since the Wet Tropics water resources moratorium was announced on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010, the issue has been a priority for me, because it has the potential to impact significantly on people, industries and communities in Far North Queensland. I immediately wrote to Natural Resources Minister, Stephen Robertson, for a “please explain” after the sudden declaration was made without any consultation with the community or industry groups. This lack of consultation is unacceptable.

The Bligh Labor Government needs to improve its communication with those affected by the moratorium and justify its actions. The stated purpose of the moratorium is to protect the security of existing water entitlements and natural ecosystems. DERM officials assert that there has been a decline in the reliability of surface and groundwater supplies in the Wet Tropics during the “dry season” over the last 10 years. That is a pretty brave statement in Australia’s wettest region.

I have requested the Minister provide the body of documented evidence used by DERM to support this assertion. It is unclear at the moment exactly what the fall out will be. Water is an important input in rural and manufacturing industries and it sustains many jobs and incomes in the Wet Tropics. What is clear is that the moratorium has undermined business confidence in the Wet Tropics. We will need to test DERM’s science and fight for some transparency through this process.

I endorse the proposal to form catchment based stakeholder groups across the region to co-ordinate a community response, challenge the science and question the implementation process involved. It is clear the moratorium is a precursor to a water resource plan for the Wet Tropics. Water resource plans are not new, but it would be unusual for the Bligh Labor Government to implement one plan for the whole of the Wet Tropics, as water resource plans are usually based on a single catchment.

There are six catchment areas affected by the moratorium, namely the Herbert, Tully/Murray, Johnstone, Russell, Mulgrave and Mosman/Port Douglas catchments. It is a massive area to throw under one blanket rule. I understand efforts were underway for catchment based groups to be established with local community based NRM group, Terrain, acting in a co-ordinating role, which will include representatives from rural industry, local government and other stakeholders.

It is totally unreasonable for the Bligh Labor Government to think it will be able to get away with doing a cheap and nasty plan for the entire Wet Tropics and not consult with local stakeholder groups in individual catchment areas. That would be unprofessional and invalid scientifically. Minister Robertson should be doing individual water resource plans in each catchment area.

If it pursues a single Wet Tropics plan and fails to recognise the real differences between these catchments, it will show how lazy and incompetent the Bligh Labor Government has become.

---

Contact:	Andrew Cripps MP Member for Hinchinbrook	Address:	PO Box 1515 Ingham Qld 4850	Ph:	07 4776 1428
		E-mail:	<a href="mailto:Hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au">Hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au</a>	Fax:	07 4776 3503

---