

MP URGES NEW FLOODPLAIN AUTHORITY

The Queensland Government needs to take back the responsibility for managing floodplains as the current system cannot cope with the resources boom, said the Member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, MP.

"The existing floodplain boards were created to deal with farmers' levees using a 1 in 20 year flood model. Now they are having to scrutinise major mining constructions designed to models of 1 in 2,000 year flood events and higher," said Mr Johnson.

"Structures of this size are a huge gamble for all the floodplain users, not just the mines. These constructions should be properly scrutinised by the Department of Environment and Resource Management. The cumulative effect of multiple structures also needs to be assessed. Local flood plain boards do not have the financial or professional resources to do this. "

Mr Johnson said he was aware of at least two major constructions proposed on the Nogoa flood plain, two more on the Mackenzie floodplain and multiple proposals on the Belyando floodplain.

"There are an increasing number of coalmines being built on floodplains at a time when we are being warned to expect more frequent and more severe flood events. The government should not be trying to slough off their responsibilities onto the flood plain boards. These boards only comprise local council staff, not hydrologists or geologists or engineers. I think the public should feel very threatened by the situation and I do think it is a recipe for future disaster," he said.

Mr Johnson said mine construction involved massive structures which could alter flood plains and affect other users such as towns and farms. He said the issue was happening right across Queensland.

"DERM does have access to all the professional advice required for a proper scrutiny of floodplain projects and this is vital if we are to properly protect Queensland's waterways, country towns and agricultural industries," he said.

Mr Johnson said he had spoken on the issue in Parliament last week after he saw the Mayor of the Balonne Shire, Donna Stewart, call for action on the subject and receive a pat reply from the Department saying that under the legislation it was an issue for local authorities.

"That may well be so but that doesn't make it acceptable or admirable. The legislation clearly needs to be amended to recognise the changed situation on Queensland's floodplains and the Government clearly has to shoulder its executive responsibilities," said Mr Johnson.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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