



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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BREMER RIVER, IPSWICH

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (7.26 p.m.): The Bremer River in Ipswich is a long way from being the asset for the city that it could and should be. It has long been used as a sewer for the city's industrial waste, as the back fence of many an overgrown horse paddock and as the place of real estate labelled flood prone and hence undesirable. The Bremer River is muddy and polluted for many reasons, and no-one is especially to blame. The river naturally has a muddy bottom, so no-one should kid themselves that before white settlement the Bremer was a clear blue mountain stream. Since settlement, though, this muddiness has been exaggerated by land clearing on the highly erosive soils on the upper catchment. Industries such as woollen mills and abattoirs have fed pollutants directly into the river, and stormwater and dumping have added rubbish to the natural flow.

While, as I said, it would not be fair to blame anyone in particular for the state of our river, our attitudes are changing and it is well past time that our planning and care of the river changed, too. Other cities, most notably Brisbane, have significantly changed their approach to their rivers, making them a focus of community activity. I am pleased to say that Ipswich is beginning to make a change in the same direction. The Ipswich City Council, with a grant of \$4.5 million from the state government, recently closed the outdated Tivoli Waste Water Treatment Plant and upgraded the Bundamba plant to modern tertiary treatment.

A step currently under way is the Bremer River proactive inspection program, a joint initiative between the EPA, the Ipswich City Council and the Boonah Shire Council. The inspection program, which began in November last year, is a commitment to sample the water quality all the way along the river to work out what the pollutants are, where they are coming from and then to deal seriously with whoever is causing them. As part of the process, the EPA is auditing 122 sites and local councils are looking into 150. Already results are coming in and the EPA is working with industries to sort out their waste water issues. The sampling process is due to be completed by May this year.

Right now, Mr Speaker, I would not swim in the Bremer if you paid me, but this process is the first significant step in comprehensively auditing the river, working out where the problems are and fixing them. The community can also get involved in cleaning up the Bremer River. There are active river improvement groups in Merrell Street at Booval and Tiger Street, West Ipswich. The recent Clean Up Australia Day at Sadliers Crossing organised by Councillor Andrew Antoniolui and I drew 50 or 60 people, and together in a morning we just about filled a 10-metre skip.

To me this community effort clearly demonstrates the strong community support for cleaning up and focusing on the river. Our attitudes, as I said, are changing. The people of Ipswich know better than to expect high grass, needles and snakes along our riverbanks. Together we should all imagine and plan for a river in which we can swim and a riverbank of parklands and walking tracks that we can all enjoy.