

POLICY STATEMENT

Water Security

Water shortages and the lack of water security threaten every aspect of life in the Territory. Whether it is a lack of accessible drinking water in communities or outstations or water to drive the agriculture, mining, manufacturing and cattle industries—water security will determine the future of the Territory.

In order to grow our economy, we need to have a plan to provide water to grow our population and drive our industries.

Water for Drinking

Power and Water has estimated that by 2025 we will need to supplement our water supply just to keep up with demand for drinking water in the Top End. Central Australia, regional and rural areas and our remote communities face similar challenges, which require immediate action. Last year, representatives of the Borroloola, Barkly and Ngukurr communities described the effects of years of drought as ‘dire’ and worried for the future of their country.

Water for industry

Together mining and manufacturing, agriculture (including forestry and fishing) and construction make up over a 25 per cent of our Gross State Product and each of these is completely dependent on access to water. Growing our economy and increasing investment in the Territory requires that we provide ready, accessible and secure access to water.

The Labor Government has missed a critical opportunity

The Labor Government has done nothing to secure our water future, letting critical opportunities to grow the economy pass by. In order to encourage investment in the Territory we need to provide, not only water security, but water surety.

In a 2018 report, the CSIRO found that, through targeted infrastructure investment, the Territory could unlock more than 1,000 gigalitres (GL) of useable water. To put this in perspective, the total water consumption for the Territory in 2016-17 was only about 194 GL according to the ABS.

CSIRO’s *Water resource assessment for the Darwin Catchments* has identified up to 1 million hectares of potentially irrigable agricultural soils in the Darwin area alone. Investing in water infrastructure could release almost 500 GL for agriculture, adding \$2.3 billion and 2,500 jobs to the economy.

Years of complacency and inaction have left the Territory behind. It is time to catch up.

POLICY STATEMENT

Business case for water infrastructure in the Top End

The Coalition Government has also created the \$1.5 billion National Water Infrastructure Fund, which may be available in the future for the construction of water infrastructure projects in the Territory.

In 2019, the CLP was instrumental in obtaining a commitment from the Coalition Government to fund a \$2 million business case for the development of water infrastructure in the Top End (**Water Infrastructure Business Case Project**).

Phase 1 of the Water Infrastructure Business Case Project will identify feasible projects and will be completed later this year. Phase 2, which will be completed in mid-2021, will include the development of a detailed business case for a 'reference project' that is selected as part of Phase 1. Based on the outcome of the Water Infrastructure Business Case Project, a clear picture of a shovel-ready project, along with costings and investment criteria, should be developed.

The CLP's Plan

If elected, a CLP Government will:

- Fast-track the construction of the water infrastructure project that is identified by the Water Infrastructure Business Case Project, with construction to begin immediately;
- Task the Territory Coordinator with oversight of the development, construction and funding of the Water Infrastructure Business Case Project, in order to complete and bring the project online within the first term of Government;
- Develop a task force to investigate additional water use and infrastructure projects to supplement water supply in the Territory, including recycling and reuse of greywater, sea water and stormwater for industrial and agricultural uses;
- Subsidise the increased utilisation of rainwater storage tanks in new and existing homes and businesses in order to ease the burden on our current water network (approximately 60 per cent of water use in the Territory is for garden irrigation);
- Expand the Living Water Smart program to conserve water and ensure that water waste lowered to an absolute minimum;
- Increase water security for Central Australia by investing in expanded use of reverse osmosis and other technologies in conjunction and consultation with communities, homelands and outstations;
- Rule out mandatory metering on privately-owned rural bores;

POLICY STATEMENT

- Introduce a bore maintenance education and training program;
- Decrease Power Water Corporation's drawing from the McMinns and Howard East borefields to ensure adequate water for residents who use those aquifers; and
- Work with rural and remote communities across the Territory to address water security and innovative ways to ensure that water shortages do not reach critical levels.