

CONCERNS RAISED ON POTENTIAL SCRAPPING

KATIE HALL

A TOWNSVILLE MP has raised serious concerns over the potential scrapping of the multi-billion dollar Hells Gates Dam project.

The Australian on Monday reported Labor would look to target more than \$10b in funding for regional projects to “rebalance” the upcoming budget, in order to implement Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s election promises.

In response to the project not featuring in Labor’s pipeline of infrastructure projects on the weekend, Herbert MP Phillip Thompson hit out at the federal government for showing a “complete disdain” for Townsville.

“Next week’s budget is the first real test of the Albanese Labor Government’s commitment to Townsville, and the first thing they want to do is cut a \$5.4bn project which would have created 10,000 jobs and \$6bn in GRP,” Mr Thompson said.

He said Labor would instead use the funds to pay for projects in the country’s south instead.

He said the move may be a sign of more cuts in next Tuesday’s budget announcement.

“The Albanese Labor government has already said it wants to cut the Community Development Grants Program and the Building Better Regions Fund,” he said.

Townsville Enterprise conducted a \$24m business case for the project which was delivered to both state and federal governments in May this year. TEL CEO Claudia Brumme Smith said the project would have delivered jobs and opportunities for the North. “This dam was fully funded in the last budget, not just promised at the last election,” TEL CEO Claudia Brumme-Smith said.

“The federal government must decide if they want to hurt regional Queenslanders and those who rely on new jobs and new industries like hydrogen that will flow from this project.” She said without key

infrastructure from the federal government, they could not secure the future of the North.

“Hells Gates Dam was put forward by the community because there is a need for water security in Northern Australia,” she said.

“The region requires population, agriculture, and renewable energy – all of this requires water allocations and storage. “With climate change, we are facing the same amount of rainfall in a shorter period, which makes an additional capacity dam critical.” Former Prime Minister Scott Morrison made the Hells Gates Dam project announcement in March this year, during a visit to Townsville – but it was received with mixed reviews by several politicians.

[One politician to express his opinion of the project was Hinchinbrook Mayor Ramon Jayo, who said the dam would do nothing to protect the region from flooding.](#)

At the time he told the Bulletin he was pleased of the “indirect” benefits the project would bring the region, such as employment, but was “dismayed” the original intention of the Bradfield Scheme was not being pursued.

Burdekin Mayor Lyn McLaughlin also expressed concern over the commitment.

“ ... I was very surprised to hear of a commitment for the construction of Hells Gates Dam prior to full environmental impact assessments and business cases being completed,” Ms McLaughlin said.