



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard 6 August 1998

MR H. WELZMAN

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (7.23 p.m.): I have spoken on two occasions this week about the need for politicians to listen to and respond to community concerns. Equally important is the need for Governments to be compassionate in the exercise of power rather than to be rule bound regardless of individual circumstances. I have asked the Minister for Natural Resources to show such compassion to a Barron River constituent, Mr Henry Welzman. Mr Welzman owns some 130 hectares of land which will be totally flooded if the longstanding proposal for a dam on Flaggy Creek is realised. Today, Mr Welzman is unable to either develop his property or to sell it because of the doubt that surrounds its future. As a result of a back injury, he is totally unable to work and is living on a pension. Currently he lives with and supports his ageing invalid mother at Trinity Beach. He will soon be forced to sell her house because of the situation.

Successive Governments have been conducting studies over many years to determine whether the Flaggy Creek dam should be built to supplement the water supply for Cairns. The latest study recommended by the Water Infrastructure Task Force will not be completed for some time and will only then recommend an EIS for preferred options, as several sites in addition to Flaggy Creek are being considered. Clearly, a final decision on the future of Mr Welzman's land is still some years away. The official response is that his property will be resumed only when required for Government purposes. In the meantime, he waits, his despair increasing. Governments should make decisions based on sound policy. I agree that that must be done with due regard for the public purse, but in cases like this, compassion must also be shown. Even if the Government decides to resume the land now, it would have an asset to realise if the dam were not built. Currently, the only loser in this situation is Henry Welzman.

I am pleased to report that the deputation that I arranged for Mr Welzman with Minister Welford has resulted in a decision to give consideration to his case and carry out a valuation of his property. I will be personally pursuing this matter to, I hope, a successful conclusion with the early Government resumption of Mr Welzman's land so that people like him will be able to say that a Beattie Labor Government truly does both believe in and act on the principles of justice and compassion.
