



Speech by

**SHAUN NELSON**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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Hansard 17 September 1998

**WATER AUCTIONING, TINAROO FALLS DAM**

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—ONP) (10.32 p.m.): Tonight I rise to condemn the practice of auctioning water from the Tinaroo Falls Dam. I point out to members of the House who might not be familiar with the practice that at the moment about 10,000 megalitres is set aside and auctioned off to farmers, basically to the highest bidder. Ten thousand megalitres is nowhere near enough water to supply the 864 farmers in the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area—the MDIA. I believe the practice turns farmer against farmer and makes it incredibly difficult for them to work their crops viably. They are paying about 250 points for each megalitre of water. That makes it incredibly hard for them to plan for the future. I know that this is how the DNR operates at the moment. The practice is incredibly restrictive on farming in the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area.

The Tinaroo Falls Dam was built in 1953 for approximately \$12m back then. I think by now we have paid for the Tinaroo Falls Dam. It has raised a lot of revenue in the past. To pay for its upkeep, I think it is wrong to burden the farmers of the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area with the unfair practice of auctioning water. That dam should well and truly have been paid for by now. Let us face it, \$12m is not a hell of a lot.

I ask—and I will be asking in future—that this practice of the DNR be stopped. I admit that the farmers should still pay for the water; they should not get it for free. If it is going to be auctioned off, sufficient water should be allocated so that the farmers do not have to compete against each other for the water and so that they can buy it at a fair price. It should not just be a revenue-raising stunt. These farmers have been hard pressed. Perhaps we could do something about it.

Time expired.

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