



Speech by

**SHAUN NELSON**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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Hansard 20 October 1998

**WATER STORAGE, IRVINEBANK; ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY**

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—ONP) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That the Minister for Mines and Energy will formally apologise, and allow adequate compensation to be paid to, the Operators of the Irvinebank State Treatment Works. He must also contribute meaningfully to government decisions which ensure that Queensland has adequate and secure power, generated by projects, which create infrastructure with the most attractive benefit cost streams, which are long lasting, which have high salvage values, and which create the highest number of long term and permanent jobs across the maximum number of regions and industries."

I intend to speak only to the first part of this motion, and I intend to speak briefly. Today the Minister told the House that he would quite happily speak on this subject to the Hillas, the people who used to operate the State treatment works. I am going to hold the Minister to that. I ask him to tell me when he will next be in Cairns so that I can hand that date on to the people concerned and they can speak with him. I also want to address some of the points that the Minister made this morning.

The simple fact is that those people have tried time and time again to deal with the department on numerous issues. I can present correspondence going right back to 1984 on the subject of how they have tried to address this issue through the Parliament. They have tried to do the right thing by answering the correspondence from the department. The department has not answered their correspondence, their allegations or their concerns about this issue; that is the crux of the matter. They have tried to get adequate representation from the department on the issues that are important to them, but they are not receiving it. So to say that they have not been answering correspondence is a lie. The only correspondence that they have not answered are the heavy-handed demands for the Ibis Dam to be handed over by them to the Minister and his department. The Hillas they do not intend to do that. They will not sign anything to that effect, because they feel that that is unfair treatment, especially when no thought is being given to their current situation.

I have had long meetings with these people. The simple fact is that they were not given the chance to back out. They bought into this in 1984 for approximately \$120,000—or that is the figure in the original agreement that they gave me. Slowly but surely the whole concept has deteriorated, with some incredibly shonky work done by the previous Mines and Energy Minister—my predecessor in Tablelands—and the repair work that was done on the dam.

For all those bleeding hearts who may be around the place, I point out that the dam was a heritage listed site. It was built in 1907 by a fellow called John Moffatt, who originally ran the place. It had in excess of something like 3,000 tonnes of concrete poured over it. It was destroyed by the previous Mines and Energy Minister. The issue of whether or not that was legal is not something to be discussed here and now. However, the simple fact remains that the whole concept behind this is the unfair treatment by the department. Those people have tried time and time again to have their case heard on numerous levels. The answers that they have received from the department have been totally ignorant of the issues surrounding their situation and, again, have been completely heavy handed.

Maybe there is a legal precedence for the State to do this sort of thing. However, it all comes down to what I said this morning: fair and just treatment. We are a large organisation, and we are a State Government—

**A Government member:** You're not a Government.

**Mr NELSON:** I am sorry. We make up a Legislative Assembly that has an awesome——

**Mr Sullivan:** A Parliament.

**Mr NELSON:** This Parliament, or Legislative Assembly, has an awesome amount of power, and in exercising that power and making decisions we must never forget the people who are at the receiving end of those decisions. As I said this morning, it is my humble opinion that the Minister should be a buffer between the people and his department. He should represent not only the attitudes of his constituents but, through his whole party, the attitudes of the people of Queensland to his department and should give it some direction. The Beattie Government is jobs oriented. Therefore, it should try to make the Department of Mines and Energy jobs oriented, too.

All I ask is that the Minister provide me with a date when those people can see him, because they would dearly love to do that. Hopefully, we can bring some conclusion to this issue. I really would like to see this issue resolved. I would like a fair outcome for the people involved. I would like the department to get what it needs out of this, too. But in the long run, I want to see some fair activity and some answers. That is all I ask. I do not think that is too much to ask for.

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