



Speech by

Tony ELLIOTT

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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WATER RESOURCES, RURAL QUEENSLAND

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (6.46 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by my colleague, the member for Keppel. As the member for Callide said, those opposite can hide behind their rhetoric and they can use all the smoke and mirrors they want, but the bottom line is that what has happened in this State is that since the change of Government in 1989 we have gone through a period in Queensland where all the people who were interested in irrigation have just about died of despair. They have been devastated by the lack of action and by the reports that were either never brought down or were never finalised.

When, finally, a coalition Government returned to power, the Water Infrastructure Task Force was set up. The task force utilised the services of some of the most practical people in this State. Honourable members do not have to take my word for this. I invite them to look at Country Life and various other rural newspapers in this State. Those newspapers reported on the potential of finally reversing this absolutely unbelievable attitude that developed during the term of the Goss Government where nothing was done. Perhaps a minuscule amount of work was started in respect of water.

We live in the driest continent on earth. There is a great need for foresight and vision. We need to pull together and work for the common good of this State. That is preferable to having these ridiculous political discussions and arguments about what should and should not be done.

The task force went to a tremendous amount of trouble. We were on the verge of seeing the establishment of dams in this State. Surely to goodness not one member in this House would suggest that further water projects would not bring further prosperity to this State. As my colleague the member for Callide so correctly said, look at the St Georges and the Emeralds of Queensland.

I can remember that when I was a young person there was nothing much in St George. About the only thing that kept St George alive was a few people who worked on the railway.

Mr Johnson: You could get a fight there.

Mr ELLIOTT: You could get a fight there fairly easily; you are right about that. There were plenty of shearers in the town. When there was no shearing, there were plenty of them in the pub and it was easy to get a fight there, too. All jokes aside, this is a serious subject. St George has developed into a magnificent, prosperous centre where there are real jobs for young people in their own district. The same thing has occurred at Emerald and in other centres right across the State.

In my own area, Goondiwindi has been a great success story. The town has survived endless droughts, floods and other disasters. One would think, "This place is going to fall apart." However, the moment we have a reasonable season, everything comes back again. Irrigation is bringing huge amounts of money into the area. Those opposite have to stop looking at irrigation and saying, "Someone wealthy might benefit out of this." The real problem with those opposite is that they have this nasty mentality that someone might do some good out of some Government measure.

It is a mentality of greed and envy: just because a person does not have an irrigation farm, no-one else can have one. The Government hates to think that someone might benefit from something that is done by the public. When we all sit down and analyse these things and look at what can be achieved in a community through the allocation of water, we realise that there is so much more that can be done than just enabling people to grow a crop and actually making some money out of it. The multiplier effect of irrigation is massive. I refer to the agricultural engineering services, such as the Janke brothers, the Gessners, the Simplicity air seeders of Dalby, Connor Shea Napier. There are endless examples where—

Time expired.