



Speech by

Hon. KEN HAYWARD

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

Hansard 5 October 2000

DROUGHT DECLARATIONS

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.51 p.m.): I rise in support of the amendment and in opposition to the motion. I will speak about the motion shortly. However, before I do so I wish to indicate that I heard what the member for Crows Nest had to say and I listened to what other honourable members had to say, including the member for Fitzroy. He made a very important point. I think the member for Crows Nest, in his own way—and it is very rarely that I say something like this—picked up on it. The member for Fitzroy said that the worst thing we can do is interfere in the process. He said that we should tell the people on the drought committees to get out and do their job. That is also exactly what I heard the member for Crows Nest say. It is important that the meetings of the drought committees take place.

Tonight we might get somewhere when the motion is defeated and the amended motion is agreed to. The amended motion states that other factors should be taken into account, including the effectiveness and distribution of any past rainfall and that rainfall totals alone should not be relied on. That is exactly what the member for Fitzroy was saying. That is where we should not head. If we start relying on other things we start to interfere in the process. What happens then? Once we start doing that we get involved in all sorts of other issues. We get into issues such as what management practices people might have with regard to their property and how a particular property will respond to deteriorating seasonal conditions. But something that also relates to management practices is that a number of properties are not of a substantial size, causing people to keep artificially high numbers of stock. There are all sorts of things that do not encourage a grazier or property owner to manage their stocking rates conservatively. These are important issues.

The worst thing that can happen is when people—for example, politicians—start interfering with the process. I acknowledge the point made by the member for Crows Nest. He said, "Let's get these drought committees meeting and talking about it. Once they're aware of the issues, the decisions will be made. They will follow as a consequence of that, and that is what good policy is about."

If we go back in history—and we have all been back in history to the late eighties—we find that things other than rainfall influenced decisions on whether a property or a shire was drought declared. What occurred during that time was disgraceful. It resulted in a Public Accounts Committee report containing unanimous recommendations, including a number of changes to the administration of drought relief by the Department of Primary Industries. That is why it is important that we never put ourselves in a position such that those circumstances could be replicated—where a property or a shire being drought declared depends upon the whim of a politician. Once that starts to occur, it causes great problems not just within the political process but also in grazing and farming organisations. We should avoid heading in that direction. As I said, the point made by the member for Crows Nest was very important. The drought committees should be meeting and looking at the issues. Once they look at the issues they will start making decisions. We should not be interfering—

Mr Palaszczuk: It takes only one person—a member of the local drought committee—to ask for a meeting and the meeting has to be convened. It is as simple as that.

Mr HAYWARD: The Minister illustrates the simplicity of the process.

The honourable member made us aware that it has to happen. Let us ensure that they get out there, meet and start making decisions. If by some chance this amendment does not get through

tonight and we have a situation where rainfall totals alone are not relied on to determine whether or not a property or a shire is drought declared, we are bound to repeat the disasters of history.

Time expired.
