



Speech by

Hon. KEN HAYWARD

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

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WATER RESOURCES

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.26 p.m.): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate tonight against the motion moved and in favour of the amendment moved by the minister. The issue of water is a very emotional one, especially the use of water, because immense parts of Queensland and Australia are suffering from drought.

This evening the member for Tablelands, who moved this motion, spoke about the issue of viability of farms in her own region. She said that the viability of those farms is affected by the cost of water. I strongly support these water reforms because water is an incredibly valuable asset. It is the difference between a viable farm and, for a lot of people, a dust bowl. It is the difference between a crop and no crop. It is the difference between an income and no income. As a bank manager once said to me, 'The access to and availability of water means the difference in whether or not we will finance your crop.' In essence, this is really about people running their businesses and deciding what they want to do. It is important to recognise that water is an incredibly valuable resource. We need to understand that and to work for reforms to ensure that the resource is there and is available to people. We need to give them some certainty in their farming enterprise.

I refer to something said by a speaker from the other side of the House which upset me. The member spoke about the importance of ring tanks and how people should be able to construct them. This is an emotional issue, but when those opposite talk about water harvesters they accept that a scarce resource is being grabbed by a few people because they have put big ring tanks or whatever on their properties. The member for Callide would know this. I have missed hearing from him tonight; I thought he might have been speaking in this debate. If members go out to a property in, say, St George and talk about water harvesters—the member for Callide is looking at me because he knows this is the case—they will find that people hate them because people cannot get any certainty about their own irrigated plan, because the harvesters take away the water. That means that the water they have paid for through their allocation is simply unavailable to them. As the minister pointed out earlier, when rain comes down that water then flows towards the river. Gravity is involved and it takes the water towards the river. Some people from One Nation had some difficulty in understanding that. If that water is captured, it then cannot go into the river, so it takes away that essence of certainty. I do not want to get off this issue, but it is extremely important that we understand the damage that water harvesters can do and the difficulty that they create in water reform and in the development of a framework for water reform.

In 1994, as most members of this parliament would know, all Australian states and the Commonwealth agreed to a comprehensive water reform framework. And coming back to what the member for Tablelands was talking about, that framework developed an important element in relation to rural irrigation pricing reform. Tranche payments under the national competition policy agreements are dependent on the states progressing those reforms. That is the pressure that all states have agreed to. The Commonwealth agreed with the states in 1994, and all governments since then have agreed to it.

We meet these requirements so that we can progress these reforms. But the reforms are extremely important because they are about ensuring the viability of rural industry in this state. I assume that is one of the reasons why the member for Callide did not involve himself in this debate tonight. When we look at issues like water harvesting and support things like that, we immediately remove the issue of certainty for many farmers in this state and put them in a position where we can

have all the water reform we like but we cannot make any progress in actually getting water to their properties.

Time expired.
