



Speech by

**ROSA LEE LONG**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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### **SUNWATER**

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (10.23 a.m.): Irrigators in the Mareeba Dimbulah Irrigation Area—the MDIA—are in a similar position to that of the Burdekin irrigators in that they are incensed at the prices charged by SunWater for irrigation water. By way of protesting and trying to be heard, irrigation water users have been withholding a percentage of SunWater charges which have significantly risen in recent times. Now SunWater has sent them threatening letters of demand which have caused much trauma to battling growers.

Cane producers have just been through a period of record low prices, and even though the movement is trending upwards they still have a way to go before they cover costs such as depreciation. And as anyone knows, no business can survive long term unless these costs are met. The fruit and vegetable growers are in a similar position. They have had more than their share of problems without the extra impost of harsh water charges.

At this point in time, irrigators feel they are not getting a fair hearing—in fact, they are not being listened to at all. Representatives have tried to reason with SunWater but are being ignored also. They believe that SunWater will rake in a financial windfall at the expense of the battling growers, and if the present price path is not reviewed in the near future many farmers will not survive.

One has to remember that there is no competition in the supply of water to that area; SunWater is the only supplier. The present situation is stifling development opportunities in the MDIA region and leaves one wondering if this dictatorial action by SunWater is a sign of things to come.

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