




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Thursday, 29 November 2012

WET TROPICS WATER RESOURCE PLAN; ATHERTON TABLELANDS, METHADONE CLINIC

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.35 pm): This morning I asked the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines to stop the rollout of the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan and bring the planned review of the Water Act 2001 forward before deficiencies in the legislative framework threaten the viability of primary production in the Wet Tropics. The rush through is only that, ending the viability of water users as these water resource plans are based on the Water Act 2001, which is flawed. I believe the minister has put the cart before the horse in promising an overhaul of the water legislation but only after farmers have been stuck with the outcome of the old legislation. Continuing on with the water management plans was supporting the former Labor government's water management legislation forcing irrigators to struggle with inadequate water allocations and restrictive water management plans. We need to get this right as the viability and sustainability of our farmers is too important to implement a framework that is completely flawed. It is common sense to hold off and immediately review the act.

The other issue is the restrictive moratorium, which is counterproductive and is unnecessarily hampering farmers trying to expand or diversify operations. A blanket moratorium requires the bureaucrats to develop management plans that have little to no understanding of local water issues. I call on the government to listen to producers who have the experience and knowledge to develop workable water management plans. At the moment government departments are making determinations on water management with the community in an advisory role. That model has failed and the communities need to be put back in the driver's seat.

Yesterday I tabled a petition signed by 312 residents of the Atherton Tablelands requesting a review of the methadone clinic in Malanda and Atherton. The residents of Malanda and surrounding districts draw to the attention of the House the existence of two methadone providers in these small rural communities, which are located just 18 kilometres apart. Malanda is a family oriented farming community and the methadone program is attracting drug users into the town, which does not have the resources or the facilities other than the methadone clinic to support the rehabilitation of drug users. The availability of methadone in small rural communities such as Malanda has a devastating effect on the residents and has caused much grief to families in the small, close-knit community. There has been a notable increase in the number of used syringes found by council workers, and a seven-year-old girl was injured by a discarded contaminated needle and faces an agonising three months of testing for blood transmittable diseases such as HIV, hepatitis and hepatitis C.

We ask that the methadone program is removed from Malanda and protective measures are taken to prevent injury to children, families and visitors utilising the public facility in the town from discarded drug utensils. We ask for the installation of used syringe disposal units, soft fall in the playgrounds, blue lighting in the public toilets and funding for council workers to rake and clear the public sandpit.

(Time expired)