



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**


**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 May 2018

**MOTION**

**Water Prices**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (5.44 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the member for Burdekin. Those opposite pretend to be the friend of the average Queensland family, but Queenslanders remember. They remember the impact of those opposite when they were in government. It was not that long ago. It was for a short time. Some 14,000 jobs were lost under the LNP. Over 600 Department of Agriculture and Fisheries staff were lost under their regime.

It is my department that is there to assist primary producers for whom water is the lifeblood of their businesses. It is my department that responds to the impact of climate change on our farmers. The threat of climate change is one of the biggest costs to producers into the future. Those opposite do not accept the science on climate change.

Earlier this year I was in Toowoomba launching the Drought and Climate Adaptation Program—a \$17.5 million program funded by the Palaszczuk government, Meat and Livestock Australia and the University of Southern Queensland. Those people believe in the need to address climate change. We will address that with the assistance of those groups.

Last night I was surprised to hear the member for Callide speak about ice. He said, 'Ice, not global warming, is the big killer and this recurring calamity often strikes quickly.' I can confidently inform the House that there is no farmer in the regions I tour who has approached me and expressed concern about increasing snow or ice causing an impact on their property. However, in my extensive travels across the state drought has been raised with me on a regular basis.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Ferny Grove, I am listening to your contribution. I would like to draw you back to the motion before the House. I think you may be straying.

**Mr FURNER:** I thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker. Water and climate change go hand in hand. No doubt people would clearly understand the basics behind that. That is why we are addressing climate change and its impact on agriculture as well.

One of the costs for producers is emergency water in times of drought. My department supports primary producers through the emergency water infrastructure rebate as part of the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme. The rebate provides up to 50 per cent of the cost of purchasing and installing water infrastructure needed for emergent animal welfare requirements. The Commonwealth has made the decision to end the EWIR top-up. What is the Queensland government doing? We have written to the federal minister requesting a reinstatement of the federal government's top-up to the rebate, but they have declined that request.

Another project the LNP continue to ignore is the Wamuran irrigation scheme. I am sure the member for Glass House would be supportive of this scheme. I am sure he will come across and support us in defending this motion.

This proposal by Unitywater would supply a new source of secure irrigation water to support agricultural expansion in the Caboolture region. The proposal was to build a pipeline to pump treated water from South Caboolture north as well as an irrigation pipeline network across the region north of Wamuran. The estimated total project cost is \$55.7 million.

The Palaszczuk government, on behalf of Unitywater, applied for \$18.6 million from the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund to co-fund the capital component of the project. Unitywater will provide the balance of those funds. There are numerous economic and environmental benefits to this project: a secure water supply even in times of drought; easy freight access for growers to get crops to market; the ability for growers to have profitable crops; improved export potential for fresh crops; and up to \$150 million per annum in economic growth for local growers.

The project has been rejected by the federal government. It is really disappointing to know that the Turnbull government has again refused capital funding for this project. The Palaszczuk government is more committed to providing water security for all Queenslanders. That is why we need our fair share of funding from the federal government. If those opposite really cared about water, if they really cared about farmers and if they really cared about Queenslanders, they would get on to their fax machines and contact the federal government to make sure they reinstate the top-up, to make sure they bring it home.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr FURNER:** Plug in your fax machine. Get your faxes down there to Turnbull and the government.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr FURNER:** Get some support behind you. Stand up and have some intestinal fortitude.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members, I repeatedly called the House to order. I will not have instructions ignored by the House. Minister, I remind you to make sure your comments in future are through the chair.