

SCOTT COASTAL PLAIN, WATER ALLOCATION

1691. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

Further to my earlier question to the minister representing the Minister for the Environment, which the minister may recall -

- (1) Does the Minister for Agriculture support the development of productive agricultural industries, such as broadacre dairying and horticulture, on the Scott coastal plain?
- (2) What is the minister prepared to do to overcome the Government's restrictive policy on water allocation?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

- (1) Yes, unequivocally.
- (2) The Government is constrained in the same way as the former coalition Government was constrained by agreements made at the Council of Australian Governments. The COAG requirements lay down the framework for water law nationwide. All States have accepted that the COAG principles needed to be proceeded with. Members who were in this place in 1998 will remember very clearly the COAG principles on water law reform, and we have the same laws now as we had under the previous Government. Hon Ken Travers, who was involved more closely in the process than I, would be able to confirm that. Was it 1998?

Hon Ken Travers: It was a bit later than that. It was over a long time.

Hon KIM CHANCE: We passed that legislative change in this place in 1998, and it was fundamentally about putting in place the Council of Australian Governments' water law reforms. Those reforms treat water as a valuable resource and attempt to deal with our water resources in an economically rational way. It is based on a process of dealing rationally with water. That is the very structure of water law throughout Australia. I support the COAG agreement on water, and I support in principle and in spirit the water law reforms that were passed in this place in or around 1998. We supported them at the time when we were in opposition, although there were differences of opinion about the detail. Within the constraints of COAG's nationally agreed water law requirements and under the requirements of the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914, as amended in this place, I certainly support the practical and rational use of the water resources of the State.