



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

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RAINWATER TANKS

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.42 p.m.): I think that it goes without saying to all honourable members of this Parliament that water is our most valuable commodity. It is also a commodity that we tend to misuse, overuse and take for granted. The coalition will be supporting the motion moved by the honourable member for Nicklin. We believe that it certainly has merits. I would like to outline some of those merits and some of the other things that we could do to ensure that we conserve our water and use our water better.

However, I would like to comment on a couple of issues that were raised by the member for Nicklin. He indicated quite clearly and concisely that if we put in place a rainwater tank rebate scheme, that would mean that we would not have to build any more dams. Although I believe that that scheme would certainly have an impact on our need to build dams, I do not believe that it would do away with the necessity to build a dam from time to time. As I indicated previously, I think that it would at least reduce the frequency at which we would have to respond to our increasing water use.

It is fair to say that a lot of the water that is used is used on our gardens, is used to wash our cars and is used for other domestic purposes, which is not necessarily the best way to use it. Nevertheless, by encouraging households around Queensland to make more use of rainwater—a commodity which falls out of the sky, runs off our roofs and down the gutter into the streams and rivers—we could certainly do a lot for our environment.

I would like to indicate that I do not necessarily agree completely with the member's comment about the major impact of dams on downstream environments. There is no doubt that any dam, any water storage which is built, has an impact in some way. That is for sure. However, I think that it is fair to say to the honourable member for Nicklin that, over the past few years we have learned how to manage those impacts. That is something that we are doing far better than we have previously. Our environmental impact assessments and our social impact assessments that we put in place before we go ahead with the construction of new water storages make sure that we are aware of the downstream impacts and that we take that into consideration.

Many of us in this place would have grown up with a rainwater tank. At home, I have a tank that holds 15,000 gallons, which is about 60,000 or 70,000 litres of rainwater storage. That is my major water supply. I think it is probably fair to say that many people in the community would not appreciate what it is like for five people to use the same bathwater. That is something that I grew up with. Of course, being the eldest, I was always the last one to use the bath and did not necessarily get to use clean water. From time to time, it is something we still do at home. It is our way of conserving water.

I believe that something that comes easily is taken for granted. Most people turn on a tap and leave it running while they are brushing their teeth or combing their hair. Not long ago when I was the Minister for Natural Resources and I had this very important area in my portfolio, I saw some figures that indicated that in many places the average amount of water that was used for a shower was 200 litres. That is 44 gallons. That is an unbelievable amount of water.

We have to encourage people to conserve water. I think that what the member for Nicklin is doing with this motion is a step in the right direction. If people respected and understood the need to conserve water—went out and tapped on the tank every day and knew how much water they had—I

think that they would probably use that commodity far more wisely. It is a practice that rural people have been engaging in for years and years.

I would like to pose a couple of questions, and they are issues to be considered by the member for Nicklin and the Government as they go ahead with this motion, which will be passed. Does the motion apply generally Queensland-wide? Is it going to apply in areas that currently rely upon a reticulated water supply or to an area that has a diminishing supply of water and is faced with the consequence of having to build new infrastructure at some time in the future? They are issues that I think that we have to consider because, no doubt, that would have major implications right across the State. The question is: do we apply it to those areas that have a reticulated water supply or do we apply it across Queensland? That is one matter that has not been raised tonight.

There are some things that we have to do in conjunction with the motion, such as encourage the use of dual flush toilets and low-volume showers, turning off our sprinklers and not letting our chlorinated water, our treated water or any water run down into the gutter and into our rivers and streams and then out into the ocean. Waterwise programs have been absolutely fantastic. Water metres have been invaluable in discouraging people from wasting water. I also think that waste water reuse is something that we in this State have to really get into.
