



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

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WATER ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.24 p.m.): It is very interesting to sit in this Parliament tonight and listen to the absolute tripe that is falling from the mouths of those opposite. Earlier on today, we saw the Premier in this Parliament proclaiming his commitment and his love for everyone, including himself, which is not unusual from what we have heard him espousing around the State for the past couple of years, and also for rural families and rural people. We hear him saying that he is going to do all of these wonderful things.

What this Minister, this Government and this Premier have done over the past month or so with their Water Bill and the subsequent moratorium has been an absolute disgrace. They have ripped the guts out of rural Queensland. They have ripped the guts out of my area. The Minister does not care about those people out there. They say that he is the Slobodan Milosevic of Queensland. That is how popular he is west of the Great Dividing Range! Those people out there have nothing but contempt for the way that he has been treating them, and I will just give him a couple of examples.

Just recently we have seen this Minister, unbeknownst to his own department—even at a district level—issue moratoriums for various areas across Queensland. They arrived on the fax machine in the middle of the night. People read about it in the Courier-Mail the next day and then they had the job of trying to interpret how they affected them. Some of the moratorium notices that went around the State did not spell out whether they affected stock or domestic water; they did not spell out a whole range of things. What we have is absolute concern, absolute panic and absolute hatred out there in the community. That is the feeling.

I am going to talk for a moment about the situation on the Granite Belt. That is one part of Queensland where not one Government storage facility has been built. At the moment there is a proposal, sponsored by the Stanthorpe Shire Council and also the Department of Natural Resources, to look at constructing a dam. It would be relatively small compared with the standards of the Leslie Dam, the Coolmunda Dam, the Fairbairn Dam and other dams around Queensland. The proposal is for something that yields around 8,000 megalitres a year—very, very small in the scheme of things. That has been put on hold as a consequence of this.

Usually, the farmers on the Granite Belt requiring water build small dams. In comparison, they are exactly the same as what many people in the west build for stock and domestic dams—in the vicinity of around 20 or 30 megalitres. That is considered to be a big dam on the Granite Belt. Those people have no other capacity for irrigation water. The majority of the water that originates in the Granite Belt catchment flows out of the system, down the Severn, the Dumaresq and into the Macintyre and further down. Obviously some of it goes into New South Wales and further down into South Australia. Those people rely upon their ability to be able to capture their own water—small amounts of water, high return water—which is very, very efficiently used. What they produce from one megalitre of water is unsurpassed anywhere else in Queensland.

But this Minister with one stroke of the pen comes in and completely destroys that overnight. The Minister ought to gauge the feeling out there, but he is not interested because he is an absolute zealot when it comes to these issues; he does not care at all. What does he do? Not only has he destroyed those farming communities, he has destroyed the few contractors who actually operate there; who have six or eight people employed with them; who have their Kato, their scraper, their dozer

and their grader and put these dams down. I have heard them say to me that they are going to have to put off the six or eight people who work for them by the end of the year. Where is the compensation for those people who have now been debarred from being able to put in dams capturing overland flow—and relatively small amounts of it? Absolutely nowhere! The Minister does not give them any consideration whatsoever.

What about the other people in the Border Rivers and the Condamine/Balonne area who have lodged licence applications and who lodged them prior to the declaration of this moratorium? Would it not be fair to consider those particular applications, as happened in the case of the Murray-Darling cap? In that case licence applications that were lodged prior to the placement of that interim cap were at least able to be considered. So this moratorium has been retrospectively applied and very unfairly applied.

The Minister does not want to hear this, but many of those people had been told by departmental officers that there were no problems whatsoever in their receiving those licences and that there should not be an issue because everything stacked up. This retrospective application of a moratorium has kicked the guts right out of those people, and he does not care. With Christmas just around the corner, it is going to be a very bleak time for those people.

What is the Minister going to do about it? Absolutely nothing! He comes into this Parliament with a mealy-mouthed amendment and pats himself on the back with regard to ongoing consultation. Where is the meaningful consultation that he has conducted over the past year or so? Absolutely nowhere! It is something that has been cooked up out of his own zealotry, out of his own platform. It is something that he has wanted to do without any genuine consultation with those people. It is an absolute disgrace. If he wants to go somewhere to test the depth of his consultation, he should go to the Granite Belt.

Time expired.
