



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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NANANGO ELECTORATE

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (7.24 p.m.): I would like to take this opportunity to mention the important economic contribution that the Nanango electorate makes to the state of Queensland. Its economic input and growth potential was not recognised or reflected in the allocation of funding in the recent budget. The government tends to forget that the Burnett region, which is located on the doorstep of the greater Brisbane area, has graduated from being basically a primary and agricultural industry region to one that encompasses the potential for economic growth. Today, the area has not only the primary and agricultural industries—which have diversified dramatically—but also hugely expanded commercial, industrial and tourism industries.

All shires contribute to this state's export income. A breakdown of each industry in the Burnett region reveals some amazing facts about the initiatives and the new products that are coming from the region as a whole. In that context, I believe that the government should reconsider allocating more funds to the Nanango electorate in recognition of its input into the state's economy. That funding should be consistent with its potential development. The area can no longer be seen as a declining rural area, although the current drought is causing much concern.

Many industries in the Burnett need assistance, either through funding or individual government department cooperation, in helping to realise their full potential. Owing to its proximity to the major coastal areas and Brisbane, I urge the government to consider offering more incentives for decentralisation. In the southern part of the Nanango electorate, the shires in the Brisbane Valley are also making enormous contributions to the state's economy, again without the appropriate financial support that is due to them. They have many chances to expand existing industries but lack a lot of the necessary infrastructure, especially transport, which is holding back the economic development of such a rich and diverse area. Transport infrastructure is an essential ingredient for any rural area's success.

Let us not keep the Burnett and the Brisbane Valley such a closely guarded secret. Generous capital works expenditure in the Wide Bay-Burnett region outlined in the budget is misleading. That region, which is one of 10 statistical regions in the state, does not truly reflect the needs of the whole area. I put it to the government that the statistical regions should be redrawn so that rural areas are not fused with the coastal and regional areas. This would ensure that when formulating budget funding statistical division by statistical division in the future, there can be a fairer distribution of the state's wealth in areas that have a common economic base. By splitting coastal areas and Brisbane's affluence with rural areas, a false impression is gained of what is best for each region.

In New South Wales, the cities of Orange, Dubbo and Bathurst rapidly expanded when the government decentralised its rural based departments to those areas. That had a big impact; it meant that bureaucrats actually lived, worked and made decisions resulting from hands-on experience. Today, the government employs too many bureaucrats who are making uninformed decisions while sitting at city desks. Practical experience far outweighs theory, and the decentralisation of the departments involved in making decisions on rural issues allows them to make decisions based on practical experience. If we are the Smart State, then let us be even smarter like our southern cousins and start a constructive policy of decentralisation. In return, we can keep the ministers better informed so that they can act on the practical experience and advice of their bureaucrats, not on the theories of desk-bound bureaucrats.