



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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RURAL WATER USAGE

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.10 p.m.): It is good to see that for once people in rural regions, especially farmers and primary producers, are not getting the blame for irresponsible water usage. In fact, for once it has been recognised—in the *Sunday Mail* of 4 August—that urban vandalism of water usage is more prevalent than it is amongst water-wise rural people. It has been an issue of which every representative of a rural electorate has been aware for many years and has constantly tried to bring to the notice of the government. Bush bashing of rural communities over so-called tree and water vandalism is a misnomer that dates back to the early days of settlement. In such trying times that primary producers face today, water and vegetation management are as important to rural landowners as is good stock management.

Water recycling is a major issue in many rural communities, and I urge the government to look more closely at the environmental impact that irresponsible water usage and vegetation clearing in coastal and urban areas is having on our environment. For far too long the very people who have accused rural landowners of vandalism have been blind to the very acts of vandalism that are occurring in their own backyards. They should take a drive to the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast or along Ipswich Road to see how the stripping away of vegetation by developers is reaching alarming proportions. These so-called developments are the future slums of tomorrow, with touching roof lines and little or no planting of vegetation. Where is the Green protest? They are as quiet now as they were when the water level of the Hinze Dam dropped below 50 per cent. Their silent protest is deafening.

With Queensland's population expected to increase by 40 per cent over the next 20 years, what has the government done to plan for the future? Admittedly, we recycle less than 20 per cent of our water, but the waste from city water that could be used for rural areas such as the Nanango electorate is being ignored. We are on a merry-go-round. On average, every seven to 10 years we go through a cycle of drought. Until now urban dwellers have written off drought as a rural problem and buried their heads in the sand. The current drought has shown that there is no boundary and it is a statewide problem. Those who had the good intentions but lacked the appreciation of the true situation turned their anger to the bush.

For once it appears that the message, which is way overdue, is to be forced onto our city cousins. It is bordering on criminal that urban households cannot take advantage of rainwater tanks to help alleviate the water shortage problem. Many urban councils do not like the aesthetic look that a rainwater tank may give to their shires. Now they are paying the price. Water tanks on rural, urban and farming blocks are an integral part of living in a rural community—new homes included.

The Nanango shire, like many in the Nanango electorate, has increased the minimum number of litres on new homes from 5,000 to 10,000 litres reserve in rainwater tanks. We know how to live with water shortages, and we treat water with respect. Just how the government is going to educate the urban masses into thinking 'water shortage, water storage' after decades of wanton waste will not be easy. Maybe the Greens should forget their bias against the bush and come and see how rural communities cope with water shortages and vegetation management. None are so blind as those who will not see or conserve.