



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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PRIMARY PRODUCERS

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (5.27 p.m.): I have often sat in this parliament and listened to the views expressed by members speaking on issues about which they appear to know very little. This lack of knowledge is very obvious when anything involving rural communities and rural issues is mentioned. The bush is an alien world to those members. Because they visit the bush occasionally, they believe that they are qualified to speak from a point of knowledge and, in doing so, discount a lifetime of knowledge or generational knowledge.

Primary producers are becoming an endangered species. The demands made upon them by governments, environmentalists, alternative lifestylers and animal liberationists are all taking their toll. Primary producers walk off their land because the combined costs of permits and increasing fees from every governmental department added together are such a burden that they become the final straw that makes their position in business untenable. Each government department may increase their costs marginally. Sometimes, as with tick inspection fees, they increase their costs exorbitantly. Fees that once never existed are introduced and it has reached the point where everything involving rural industry attracts a fee—water, ticks, clearing, regulations, insurance—to cover every piece of equipment. Myriad other fees means that primary producers are struggling to survive.

Primary producers are then confronted with the vocal animal liberationists and environmentalist minorities, who are listened to by government, over the issue of the culling of animals, the numbers of which have grown to plague proportion. They are in such numbers that have never been seen before, because farmers cleared the land to grow the pasture on which the animals thrive. These animals that are in plague proportion eat much of the vegetation, and they add to the problem of soil erosion. Then, due to natural drought conditions, they die from hunger and thirst because culling has not been allowed to occur. Animal liberationists demand a balance in the ecology and the animals die a cruel and inhumane death. But that is okay, because it is natural.

The environmentalists demand that forests and large tracts of land be shut down and the maintenance of pest and weed control stopped. With much of the land that was once used to support livestock unable to be used, water prices rising exorbitantly, kangaroos and other native animals growing to plague proportions denuding precious, now limited grasslands, bank fees, licences, old and new permit fees and animal inspection fees spiral. Land-holders and primary producers are forced to adhere to the ideology of radical minority city-based groups as governments pursue them as a means of remaining in power.

As a final kick, the closed up forests and the rubbish that has been allowed to build up in them alights and the devastation that has been seen in New South Wales and now recently in Queensland destroys what little is left. There are endangered creatures that are more vulnerable than the ones that the vocal minorities fight to protect and they are our farmers, the Australian larder fillers.