



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard 27 November 2002

DROUGHT

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition tonight and to sum up this debate on behalf of the opposition. Nothing better encapsulates this government's performance than its performance on the drought issue. There is a huge gap between the reality and the rhetoric. Tonight the harsh reality—the savage reality—of the drought has been outlined by a number of speakers on this side of the House. What we have seen from the government is a continuation of its meaningless rhetoric, a continuation of its whole approach which is all about politics and acting the role. We saw it initially in the debate with the contribution made by the Premier. *Hansard* will record the Premier's words tonight. He knew that *Hansard* would not record anything else—could not record anything else—but his words. There was the expression on his face of arrogance, the silly grin, the cynical approach. He could not even keep a straight face! He could not even keep a straight face as he read the words that he did not even mean. He stood here in this House and by his approach to this debate tonight clearly demonstrated the cynical, arrogant, hypocritical approach of this government to this whole issue.

The Minister for Primary Industries carried on the charade that he has performed throughout Queensland for the last few months. The Minister for Primary Industries has set out with an agenda to nitpick and delay in order to avoid putting the government in any position where it has to make a contribution to the people who are suffering in Queensland—the people whom members on this side of the House spoke about one after the other. The Minister for Primary Industries's only aim is to avoid putting up any money. That is the minister's aim, and that was clearly demonstrated in his contribution to the debate tonight. It was all about playing politics with the drought. It was all about avoiding situations that might cost this government any money simply because it is broke. It is all about playing politics with Canberra—blaming Canberra and nitpicking between himself and the federal minister. It is all about making sure that the words were right, but there is no delivery. There is no reality. The harsh reality is out there; the harsh reality is being suffered by so many people in Queensland.

The reality is that the minister and his department are useless. The Minister for Primary Industries and the DPI in Queensland are useless because there is no money available. There is no money available to the department to do simple things like prepare exceptional circumstances applications. Agforce has to do that. Local governments have to do it. Someone else has to do it! There is no capacity in the department to do it anymore. There is no capacity on the part of the minister to ensure that he can play a role in cabinet to make the government deliver. It is all about propaganda. It is all about media releases. It is all about making a big fuss over the setting up of a 1800 number that is badly needed but that does not require the sort of fuss we saw in this parliament this morning.

It is all about information management. It is all about selling a message to that section of the community who are not suffering and about creating a false impression that this government is doing something. But this government is actually doing nothing. It is refusing to support the federal government's proposal to introduce a more effective and compassionate Exceptional Circumstances Scheme, and for that it should be condemned. It is refusing to acknowledge the inadequacies of the state Drought Relief Assistance Scheme, and for that it should be condemned. It is refusing to address the need for long-term restructuring in rural communities, and for that it should be condemned. It is refusing to mitigate the impact of future droughts by failing to reinstate the \$2 billion water infrastructure development plan outlined by the member for Warrego, and for that it should be condemned.

All the government is about is media, PR, information management and creating an image that it cares. It does not care at all. The members opposite should ask the people in Queensland who are desperately trying to access some real, meaningful assistance. They do not need fancy words and they do not need the type of approach that we saw from the Premier tonight when he stood up and said the right words, but clearly did not mean them. Those people need some genuine assistance. They need less rhetoric and more reality.

It is a terrible indictment of the members who have spoken on behalf of the government in this House tonight that they have given no hope to those people. As the member for Gregory said, those people need to hope that there is a government that is prepared to address their plight. Tonight, they received from the government no hope and no indication of anything. That is a terrible indictment of the Premier, the minister—

Time expired.