



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Hansard 21 August 2003

**APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (6.06 p.m.): Primary industries is a major component of the livelihoods of the people in the Nanango electorate, whether their entire living is made from the land or they derive their income from the value adding of those products. As most people would realise by now, the Nanango electorate stretches from Kingaroy, located in the South Burnett above the ranges, to just below the Wivenhoe Dam, across some ranges at Mount Mee and down to D'Aguilar. Its nearest point is only 67 kilometres out of the Brisbane CBD.

I bring this up because everything this government does affects our area in some way. The only crop we do not seem to have is sugar, but there is even talk of trialling that. That leads to the subject of ethanol and the desire to have the South Burnett seriously considered for an ethanol plant, which I have already raised with those interested in building one. From this members can deduce that this area has the ability to crop anything—from small market gardens to wide expanses of cattle country and wheat country. Amongst that we have peanuts, a blossoming wine industry and a highly active tourism industry.

One of the year's highlights for many in the city is the Ekka. This is where rural producers' produce is showcased. I expect that most people here attend the Ekka and hopefully realise just how much rural producers contribute to Queensland's and the nation's economy. It is essential that government realise how making it more and more difficult for these producers to do their jobs will ultimately reflect on the monetary position of the state.

Many concerns are raised when it comes to our international dealings. One of those relates to GM produce and reports from Canada that growers are having difficulty finding markets as more and more people around the world indicate a reluctance to consume these crops. Most believe that there has not been enough time to ensure there are no adverse effects in the future. I know that there are many people who think that the man on the land is no longer needed and that all we have to do is import everything we need, but it is essential that the import-export dealings be carried out at the very least in a balanced manner.

Australia has held a strong self-reliant position in the world, but it is one that can be lost easily if the suppliers of the export produce find that their businesses become unviable. That is what government, with all its charges, fees, restrictions and rules, is fast making a reality. The man on the land does not feel that this government understands them or supports them. It is enough that rural areas have to combat natural conditions which, as we all know, are extremely harsh in Australia without having to continually fight government bureaucracy. Vigilance must be forever in our minds with regard to ensuring that our livestock are protected from the many diseases which have decimated herds in other countries. Mad cow disease has now been reported in New Zealand, which shows that even with stringent controls in place we cannot abandon that vigilance.

Unfortunately, with the continual cutbacks at the DPI, I and many others question whether the DPI can pull its weight. That same consideration must be given when we speak of the tourism industry, for to find mad cow disease or any other exotic disease on our shores would cripple our tourism industry just as quickly as it would cripple our export industry.

The tourism industry, as was stated earlier, is becoming a major entity in rural areas and a necessity, but it has suffered a major blow this year with the restructuring of the racing industry and the diverting of funds away from rural circuits. It will take a long time for the people to forget that

Queensland Racing wiped away almost half of the racing events in the Burnett. Nanango went from eight racing days to six, Wondai from six to three and Kumbia from three to one. The total cost borne by these towns will be in the millions. Kilcoy, which also suffered under this racing industry restructuring, was estimated by the mayor to lose about \$100,000 to that one local community alone.

When we consider all the flow-on industries that benefit—accommodation, retail and a myriad of others—we can see how quickly the dollars add up. Burrandowan's one racing day a year was thought to have been lost, but the funds that it has been denied in prize money are insufficient to ensure the continuation of the race in future years, although next year its few savings will be allocated to hold at least one more event.

In the Nanango electorate all things rely heavily on each other. Tourism relies heavily on primary produce. Primary produce relies heavily on tourism. Although the Burnett area is well known for its peanuts and navy bean industries—navy beans are baked beans, for those who do not know—the area has now become known for its developing wine industry, and the future of the olive industry in the area is expected to be bigger than big. With an influx of people coming to the area, boutique wineries and specialised accommodation come to the fore. Local beef and pork can be served with local wines. The pork industry has expanded over the years with growing exports and expansion of the local facility which now employs over 300 personnel. A state-of-the-art freezing room has also been built, and I believe it is one of the largest in the southern hemisphere.

Time expired.