



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Hansard 15 October 2003

### **WATER SUPPLY**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (6.44 p.m.): There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the supply and maintaining of constant clean water to the people of Queensland is the most important issue to face the future existence of all residents of city and country towns and must be viewed as such. The reliability of a constant water supply to those who farm is also vital for the future of the farming industry and the Queensland economy. There is no doubt in the truth of the words that water is a finite commodity. In speaking to this motion I point out the huge role water infrastructure has played in the life of the people of the south Burnett, and make no mistake: without the foresight shown by early governments, the Burnett would be a much poorer community. Parts of my constituency have experienced boom-bust years, wet years and dry, but many of these residents are now grateful for the water infrastructure that was put in place years ago—that is, that people thought longer term than just two or three years ahead.

For instance, when the Tarong Power Station was commissioned water was piped from the Boondoomba Dam near Proston. That water has not only allowed a power station to keep the lights on in Brisbane and to power industry; it has provided a vital supply to hundreds of properties to the north of Kingaroy. Due to the 2001 redistribution, this area is no longer in my electorate. But I have seen first-hand the great benefits the pipeline brings to the Wondai shire and areas north of it. There are piggeries and grazing properties which all enjoy a reliable, piped water supply for stock use. The Boondoomba Dam has also become something of a major tourist attraction to the area. When one considers that tourism is a major industry now for many inland towns, they can see why it has become so valuable. It draws boating, sailing and fishing enthusiasts from right around the state.

The Bjelke-Petersen Dam near Murgon is another example of a water supply fuelling growth industries in the district. From the south another pipeline serves Tarong Power Station, and recently the small township of Blackbutt was connected to that pipeline when it found that the town literally ran dry of water. Some believed that it was due to the pumping dry of the water table by irrigators, but others blamed the prolonged drought. Some say that there has been no storage infrastructure, but that, as the minister says, is not true. The sole exception to that is Paradise dam, which, as we are told, is currently under construction.

But the truth is that governments can bend rules to their own advantage, as demonstrated in the Burnett. When the power station looked like running out of water in the big dry of 1995, it was decided to build an emergency pipeline from Wivenhoe to keep the boilers going. That decision was made in February and negotiations for an easement started immediately. Within nine months the pipeline was in place and ready to be accessed. The wonderful thing was that the day the minister officially came to turn on the tap, so to speak, the rains came and the drought broke. We would be quite happy for the government to build a lot more pipelines to a lot more places and never have to turn them on.

The fact is that so much was achieved so quickly when the need arose, so it proves that it can be done. Money was no object when the power station that supplied more than 30 per cent of the state's power was in fact in peril. However, the pipeline is a valuable stand-by for the power station. Other users en route are now benefiting from it, and I do not think members would find one single person who would complain about it. Long pipelines have traditionally been ruled out due to their high capital costs, and at today's rate I am told that a pipeline would cost around \$1,200 per metre or \$1.2 million for a distance of 1,000 kilometres to link up a water-rich region to the north with an

overloaded system in the south, but that the cost of owning and operating such a pipeline works out at not more than \$1 per day per household—a seemingly small price to pay for a reliable source of clean, fresh water.

I know the people of Coominya, just a few kilometres away from the Wivenhoe, would be willing to pay to have that reliability and the opportunity to develop industries in the area. Kingaroy has grown to the sizeable town it is because of the certainty of a good water supply. Kingaroy has a large piggery industry and rapidly expanding abattoirs, but without increased water allocations growth in towns is jeopardised.

Time expired.