



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard 29 October 2003

APPROPRIATION BILL [No. 2]; APPROPRIATION [PARLIAMENT] BILL [No. 2]

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.46 p.m.): In rising to speak to the appropriation bills today, I have to say overall that I am relatively happy with what is going on in my electorate. People seem to be quite content. But in saying that, there are also a lot of things that we are not happy about, as government members have come to expect from me. Just like Oliver, I am going to ask for more and more, especially now the government has this windfall. It has money to burn, and I want some of it, if possible.

Mr Horan: Going to Labor marginals.

Mrs PRATT: Maybe it is going to the marginals. This government keeps saying it is fair, honest, open and accountable. This money should be distributed to all of the other electorates as well. The government should bear in mind that the demographics of some electorates are changing rapidly due to the number of people who are moving. My electorate of Nanango is increasing in its Labor vote. I would suggest that the government should consider that.

Mr Mackenroth: I fund on the principle that every electorate has Labor voters. That is the way I do all of my funding.

Mrs PRATT: That is true, but somehow it seems a little inequitable to most of us on this side of the House.

Mr Quinn interjected.

Mrs PRATT: There are a lot more in my electorate. If the member looks back at the last election results, that was the first time that the National Party was beaten by Labor. Government members can see how quickly the Labor vote is rising.

Community housing is lacking throughout my electorate. Although we have a fair amount of public housing, there is a long waiting list. There is nothing to rent or buy. Even if something can be bought, due to the rapidly rising market a lot of lower income people cannot afford it. Therefore, I would ask that community housing be looked at in our area so as to accommodate those who have been pushed out of lower priced accommodation as their rents have risen.

Turning to education, I have to thank the government. I recently attended the Kilcoy State High School's 40th birthday celebrations. They were ecstatic with their new administration block and the kitchen facilities for the kids. They were just so rapt with them. They really did get value for money. That is one thing people can say about country areas: when it comes to getting every cent's worth of value for the dollar, they can do it. I ask the ministers to consider that if they want value for money they should send it inland, because we know what it is like to budget and to do it pretty tough. Airconditioning of classrooms has been mentioned by other members in the House. We are not doing too badly in that area and I thank the government for that. Any extras will be gratefully received.

One thing we do lack in my electorate is some form of industry, although we do have the Tarong Power Station. The Nanango electorate extends right down to Esk and Woodford. Those two areas really are lacking some form of industry. It is not that far out of Brisbane. In fact, it is almost on the front doorstep. People commute quite regularly from Blackbutt to Brisbane. It is really just a hop for them to travel from Woodford or Esk. I encourage the ministers to establish an industry there where there is still plenty of land and where it is cheap. If any industry is looking to relocate or set up, that

would be an ideal spot. As I said, it is very close to Brisbane and any other facility they might be requiring.

With regard to industries, over the last five years I have often mentioned in this House the possibility of having a multipurpose cannery or an industrial zone near the Tarong Power Station. I still believe this is a fairly feasible idea. Quite a while ago I also mentioned the possibility of using the warm water from Tarong to create a fish farming industry. At the time a lot of people thought that that was perhaps a little bit of a crazy idea. Recently I read that people in Dalby have actually started to establish an inland fish farm. So it is not such a crazy idea. I think it is also one that could be promoted. Whoever would have thought of growing fish off the coast in bulk quantities in that way? But we can do it. We can do anything in Queensland, as we are often told.

Mr Mackenroth: The Smart State.

Mrs PRATT: That is what you keep telling us, Premier—sorry, that was a slip of the tongue. But if the Treasurer wants to invest money in my electorate, he should be Premier. It is as simple as that. I would even vote for that one, I think. You never know.

All these things have to be looked at. The government has to have a really good look at inland Queensland, because it is a great place to establish industry. As I said, the land is cheap. Having been in business, I think it would be an absolute advantage.

Another bit of a crisis we have at the moment is with police. I particularly refer to the Nanango township. I have had a few complaints over recent times. One very recent one is a bag snatching incident. The lady who had her bag snatched saw the perpetrator quite closely, as honourable members could imagine. There was also a witness to the event who knew the perpetrator personally. It was conveyed to the police and yet this bag snatcher still walks the street and nothing has been done. The question has to be asked: why? Hopefully we will find out.

One of my favourite bugbears, as members will all know, is dental services in my area. Although the Minister for Health says that they are improving, it is extremely slow. With this windfall the government has at its beck and call at the moment, I ask very seriously that another position be created, albeit temporarily, just to bring waiting times for dental services in the area down to those of other areas.

The inevitability of the aged care home closing is not that far away anymore. Future residents will be going to the Wondai Health Service. I have major concerns in that Kingaroy is a fast growing town and to have a public aged care facility removed still bothers me an awful lot. It also bothers me a lot more that there is no regular transport to Wondai for people who have to visit relatives who may be put in that particular home. It should not be too far out of the government's bounds to be able to afford it now that it has such a windfall. A little bit of sharing that way would help the older people of our community.

Mental health is also still a major issue. Perhaps the Minister for Health could look at setting up a permanently located health service professional in Kingaroy. We have one really strong advocate in Betty Day. She said it has become her lifelong mission to have mental health in our area addressed because she knows what it is like to have a son with that condition and the trials it puts her and him through.

I have to agree with the member for Toowoomba South with regard to the recycling of water. Queensland is a very dry state. We do not have that much water to waste. Although in my area recycling of water is not looked on favourably, at times it is necessary. There have been times in the past—and I dare say it will happen in the future—when councils have actually overlooked the use of grey water simply so that people do not become too heavily reliant on town supply. Recently we received a notice with our current rates account to say that the water is not potable. Those without tanks are carting water already and the summer season has not even started. Water recycling is a major issue. We do not want to be negligent with our water in any way, shape or form. If it is not addressed within the next few years we could be suffering a very severe crisis.

I turn now to roads. At the moment I am quite happy with the roads in my electorate and the amount of work that is being done on them. I tried to travel down here quite early yesterday morning and was late—and I am not complaining, believe me—simply because of the number of roadworks between Kingaroy and Ipswich. It was quite a major event. I am really quite happy about that and I thank the government for that.

However, a little while back I heard that one of the proposed overtaking lanes which was being built on the Blackbutt Range—the range itself, not at the top—was perhaps in danger of not being built. I ask the minister whether or not that is the case. Perhaps with this huge amount of funds that has been received that could be placed back on the agenda. I hope it is, because it is really necessary. There are a lot of accidents there. It is a major road for trucks. Not too long ago oranges were spread all over the place—I think it has happened twice in the last few months. The railing that was renewed was

all smashed up within a couple of weeks and had to be replaced again. It is of major importance that that overtaking lane is built.

We still have concerns about crossings on our roads. I have often brought up the issue of Woodford with the minister. Residents of Blackbutt have actually asked for a crossing in the main street. I know that there is a practice at the moment of not placing road crossings on major thoroughfares. The people in Blackbutt, which is a very small town, look at Yarraman, which is also a small town just 15 minutes down the road, and see that it has a crossing through the centre of town.

Mr Mackenroth: I know Blackbutt and I know Yarraman, and what one has got the other one has to have.

Mrs PRATT: We cannot have any division between these two towns. But they cannot see any reason why they cannot have a crossing. As the Treasurer knows, Blackbutt has a very, very wide main street. It is becoming a town with many elderly people. It is very hard for those people to cross the street. So again I would ask that that matter be given serious consideration.

Mr Mackenroth: I hope you're not advocating evening things up and taking the one away from Yarraman.

Mrs PRATT: I would never dare ask the Treasurer to take anything out of the towns in my electorate. The people in those towns deserve everything that they have. They live there; they have done it tough over the years.

Mr Wellington: Give him your flags.

Mrs PRATT: Yes, the Treasurer could take the flags, because the flags fly all throughout my electorate. People are very proud of their flag and they are very patriotic. So they would not mind if the Treasurer had a flag to fly as well.

Another road in my electorate is a link road between Blackbutt and Crows Nest. Although I acknowledge that this road is not a state controlled road, it is a local road that is classed as a road of significance for the councils in the area. Actually, three councils are supposed to contribute to the maintenance of this road, but they have a very small rate base and there is just no way that they would ever have the money to seal it. Therefore, TIDS funding would be very appropriate. Although in answer to a question on notice the minister stated that people could use an alternative access road that was further away, that road is actually an extra 50 kilometres away. So they are not very happy to even have to consider that. But for the road to be looked on favourably for a TIDS grant would be one of the things that I would be pushing.

There is also another road—and I thank the minister for this—but I still have concerns about it. The Memerambi-Gordonbrook Road is a great road, except for one thing—

An honourable member: It doesn't go anywhere.

Mrs PRATT: No, it is a great road. It goes to heaven, right where I live. The construction of the road was farmed out to the Kingaroy Shire Council. I am told that it came in under budget. I query why it came in under budget, because it is not quite finished. I cannot really explain it, but the shoulders of the road are very steep. There are two bus stops there—one on each side of the road. I should say that there should be two bus stops. There should be areas where buses can pull over to let the kids off the bus. But the buses cannot pull off the road, because if they did they would tip over. So it is not very safe. So when the buses pull up to let the kids off, they actually stop on the road. There is a double white line on the road so any traffic coming behind the bus has to overtake on double white lines, which is very dangerous. So that is one thing that I would like the minister to really consider. The construction of the road came in under budget. I ask if the minister could ask why the road was not made as safe as it could possibly be.

We still seem to have terribly long waiting lists for hospitals. That is not a problem that exists solely in my area; everywhere suffers from that. But in the past couple of weeks two people in my electorate have been required to accompany their husband or wife to a hospital in Brisbane. On both occasions, accommodation was needed for those people because they had to undertake a procedure. I believe that one procedure lasted about six weeks. Both of those people were on pensions and could not afford accommodation in Brisbane. When they asked for a transport subsidy and an accommodation subsidy, they were knocked back. As I said, there were two incidences of this occurring. I did not know of one until after it was all over and the family was very aggravated. But in the second case I was asked to talk to the minister about it, which I did. The matter has now been resolved. So I thank the minister for that. I wanted to say a very big thanks for that, because the couple involved on that occasion were quite distressed. The husband had had a lung transplant and one thing that he did not need at that time was extra stress on himself and his wife. That was one matter that I really wanted to mention. As I said, overall I am happy with my electorate. It is going quite well. I commend the bills to the House.