



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND WATER CORPORATION

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (7.04 p.m.): Mr John Henry Brockhurst is 94 years of age and has lived at his address for more than 73 years. He has approximately 1,000 acres of land that he has farmed for all of that time except for the years that he served this country in the war. Henry's property backs on to Somerset Dam and he has three current leases with SEQ Water. On 12 September he received a letter from SEQ Water stating that two of these leases will be terminated on 31 December 2003. On termination of these leases Henry is required to refence the land bordering those leases. The cost of refencing these areas to a 94-year-old man is prohibitive, even though SEQ Water will share in half the cost. It is interesting to note that parts of this leased land were originally a part of his property which was taken up with the dam on construction. SEQ Water proposes revegetation of the land. One lease has virgin rainforest; large parts of the other lease is open forest. It also proposes maintenance of a significant cultural site, a bora ring.

Once these leases are terminated, it will be virtually non-viable for Henry to continue farming and he will be left with no option other than to remove all his cattle and terminate his way of life for all of his 94 years. The long-term concerns centre on continuation of a cattle property requiring access to water. Meetings with Greg Steel have taken place with regard to these issues and outcomes have so far been unsatisfactory. The victimisation of Henry seems to stem from the fact that the family access the water via the old 10 chain stock route, as they have done for many years. The letter South East Queensland Water sent has been a cruel blow to a man who has lived his life with such incredible dignity and honour, and at 94 years of age failing health is inevitable and the strain on him with regard to this issue has affected his health greatly. His family asks this government to help resolve this matter as soon as possible.

Henry is a man of simple needs who still lives in a house with no running water and no electricity—by choice. He has worked hard all his life, never wanting for more than a good feed to keep him going. He has paid and still does pay all his taxes. He has never burdened society. His family is working to resolve this matter, as Henry deserves nothing less than to live his remaining days peacefully in the knowledge that he has not left any problem for his family on his passing. The letter from SEQ Water states—

The area contains inherent and significant biodiversity values which the corporation is trying to retain in areas of conservation significance.

Does that mean that after 74 years the original owner, who protected all of this in the first place, is no longer capable of preserving this land? It is already a rainforest, as considerable vegetation is used for the livelihood of an ageing and distinguished gentleman who is to lose that livelihood if he is forced to pay fencing costs that he cannot afford. His income and lifestyle have been disrupted because of bureaucratic nonsense. I call on the minister to review this case as the way that it has been handled is a disgrace. There is no justification for treating this 94-year-old farmer in the way that he has been treated.