



Speech by

Hon. Warren Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Blueprint for the Bush

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors) (10.02 am): The historic Blueprint for the Bush partnership between the state government and AgForce Queensland has reached a significant stage. The partnership has recently been extended to include the Local Government Association of Queensland, recognising the crucial role local councils play in rural sustainability. Work is nearing finalisation of key ideas, directions and actions for inclusion under major themes which emerged during the extensive consultation process. A summary of consultation outcomes and issues raised at a special blueprint symposium are available on the Department of Communities' web site.

Some of the key messages emerging from the consultation and central to the actions outlined in the Blueprint for the Bush are: communities want a say in setting priorities and decision making at the local level; population change is a challenge for rural communities, with suggestions including incentives to promote industry, reviewing tax zones and allowances, and identifying initiatives to attract new residents and retain young people; and primary producers and landholders want greater recognition of the pressures associated with balancing farm profitability with stewardship of the land.

The final blueprint document is expected to be released in conjunction with the budget process, which will consider funding allocations and implications, but the blueprint is more than an event or process; it is an opportunity to influence the future sustainability of rural Queensland. It is also a challenge to find modern solutions to sometimes old problems and to apply innovative thinking to the increasingly complex issues which describe modern society. It is an opportunity to harness the power and potential of rural communities to think beyond the physical and virtual boundaries which have, in the past, sometimes hampered the development of forward-looking solutions. The purpose of the blueprint is to support prosperous, sustainable and liveable rural communities. It will be a strategy to deliver a strong rural Queensland of prosperous, diverse and vibrant communities able to respond to challenges, manage change and seize new opportunities presented by local, national and global trends.

We live in an increasingly small world—a world stretched between the demands of international integration and local community spirit. We have little control over some things like world oil and commodity prices which affect our livelihoods. Issues like fuel prices, telecommunications and remote area tax incentives are federal government responsibilities. These are real and relevant issues for rural people, and the state government will work with communities as part of the blueprint process to have these issues addressed by the federal government. But, even in the face of international and national influences, we still have the capacity to look at local challenges and devise local solutions. The state government is committed to working in partnership with AgForce and rural communities to deliver a better future for the bush. Our commitment extends beyond the economic contribution made by our primary producers. We have adopted a whole-of-community approach because what affects one section of a community can impact on other areas.

As agreed with AgForce, legislation and policies in relation to natural resource management are not included in the blueprint, as they are subject to separate consultation and information-sharing processes. Policy and legislation in relation to land clearing is also specifically excluded from the scope of this blueprint. The Blueprint for the Bush will be a 10-year plan to help rural and remote communities and industries manage change and grow the strength and sustainability of rural Queensland. It will outline an approach which reaches across all tiers of government as well as across industry and communities. Individuals, communities, local government and business all have their part to play in ensuring a strong and sustainable rural Queensland.