




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2018

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Central and North-West Queensland, Local Government

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.43 pm): I have been meeting with local governments in Central and North-West Queensland about their plans for their communities and the challenges that they face. Firstly, I highlight to the House the situation with the staff at the Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council who were caught in the crossfire, due to no fault of their own, when the minister's bungled timing meant that a press release was issued prior to Governor in Council approval of the legislation to automatically suspend mayors and councils. The staff at Doomadgee were getting phone calls from the media and their families, asking them if they still had jobs. That was a situation that they could not answer at that stage, as they had no formal notification of the automatic suspension. It was a really difficult time and situation for staff. I know that they would appreciate an apology from this government.

In the north-west, councils' challenges range from cyclones, floods, drought, mining upturns and downturns, and government, especially the need for certainty in funding programs from state and federal governments. Sometimes it is not the quantum of funds, but it is the peaks and troughs and the constant change that make it difficult for local governments to maximise the benefits of funding to their communities. The mayors and councillors are working really hard. They are being innovative to address population decline and cost shifting, whilst at the same time trying to grow their agricultural, energy, resources and tourism industries.

The Longreach Regional Council, a great supporter of agriculture, have taken on the exclusion fencing challenge. They told me that they have seen the difference flowing through in the number of additional fleeces of wool being exhibited in local shows. With the help of former minister for local government David Crisafulli, the Richmond Shire Council, which I understand is very close to your heart, Mr Deputy Speaker, have put in place a bore water treatment plant to enhance water quality. That has been a real game-changer for Richmond. Councils such as Richmond, Flinders and Ethridge have lots of water, but they need to be able to develop it for agriculture, meat processing, tourism and community amenities. Councils are also on the hustings when it comes to seeking funds to seal key roads and freight routes through their areas. Charters Towers, Tablelands, Mareeba, Croydon and McKinlay face a similar theme with road upgrades on key freight routes, water development and tourism opportunities.

In addition, a cost shifting of biosecurity compliance is really causing councils grief. In the current budget, there is no funding to assist councils with developing their biosecurity plans, as required under the Biosecurity Act. That is a cost shift onto local government. The Shire of Burke is seeing the ups and downs of mining and Cloncurry is dealing with the difficulties brought about by FIFO mining. Carpentaria deals with some 70,000 visitors to the gulf who all use the roads, water and sewage; even though they are very welcome, they are not rateable. That is another challenge for councils right across the region.