




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Regional Queensland, Drought

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.50 pm): There is no doubt that the drought is hitting hard in regional Queensland. In fact 58 per cent of the state is now drought declared. This is not only affecting primary producers and communities; it is also affecting local governments which are being very careful with how they manage their domestic water supplies across Queensland at this time. I want to acknowledge the great work that local governments do in the management of water supplies right across this state. In fact over 30 local governments already have water restrictions in place in their towns and cities, and we have not made it to those thirsty summer months yet.

The spring rain predictions and also the outlook from the weather bureau, unfortunately, are that we are not likely to see general rainfall relief until sometime next year, and that is very, very concerning. In Queensland we do not wish to see the situation that is occurring in New South Wales where we are hearing reports of towns running out of domestic water supplies and councils being forced into the expensive option of trucking in domestic water supplies.

In Queensland it is the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program that provides financial assistance to local councils to build essential water supply and sewerage infrastructure projects in their communities. Yet, sadly, under this Labor government, there were 190 council projects that applied for funding and only 92 of those projects received funding. This means that critical water infrastructure projects that local councils want to actually do are unable to progress because they have not received a subsidy from the Palaszczuk Labor government.

Our local governments deserve better and it is the ratepayers of Queensland who will end up without domestic water if this situation is not addressed in the near future. Some councils, like the Western Downs Regional Council, have been proactive. At the cost of a million dollars, they have put down a new bore. Dalby is currently on level 3 restrictions and its reserve water supply is running low. Townsville, which I am sure you are quite familiar with, Mr Deputy Speaker Stewart, is on level 2 water restrictions and is building a \$215 million pipeline from the Burdekin Falls Dam so the city can have a reliable domestic water supply. Unfortunately, the cost to ratepayers of that project is currently unknown.

This is what happens when state Labor governments do not pull their weight when it comes to ensuring essential infrastructure of water and sewerage for towns and cities in Queensland. Over the last 10 years, we have unfortunately seen Labor governments take a billion dollars worth of grants and subsidies from our local councils, and it is our councils and water supplies that are now suffering. Queensland is on the edge of a water infrastructure cliff, and the Palaszczuk Labor government have no plans to address this need for essential water and sewerage services across Queensland.