




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Water Supply

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.26 pm): We heard yesterday that 14 communities in Queensland are at risk of joining Stanthorpe, a community that faces the carting in of drinking water by Christmas if there is no rain. Those communities that face the greatest risk include four in the Toowoomba Regional Council, two in the Southern Downs Regional Council, three in the Goondiwindi Regional Council and five in the Isaac Regional Council area.

Last year in the parliament I sounded a clear warning that local governments were facing serious consequences with their domestic water supplies. The spring rain predictions back then were not good and, sadly, the outlook has not improved for many into the foreseeable future. It is not just the drought that has contributed to the shortage of domestic water supplies. The actions of previous Labor governments, removing a billion dollars from the grants and subsidy programs, including SCAP, for the Queensland councils, have also contributed to this dire situation.

In Queensland we have the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program. However, councils have been constrained by the oversubscription to the Water and Sewerage Program. Under this Labor government, from 2017 to 2019 the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program was heavily oversubscribed, with 286 applications for projects from 74 councils and, sadly, 60 per cent of these applications were unsuccessful. For the 2019 to 2021 Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program undertaken in 2019, not surprisingly the program was again heavily oversubscribed with 167 applications for projects from 69 councils. Again many of the councils were disappointed, with only half of these applications being successful.

Local governments use this program to assist with upgrades to water supply, providing back-up bores or new headworks, providing secondary reservoirs or increasing dam storage capacity for the domestic water supply of their towns and communities. With years of drought conditions, combined with funding reductions by previous Labor governments and much of the water and sewerage infrastructure across Queensland reaching an age where it needs significant repair or refurbishment, no wonder we are seeing domestic water shortages in many communities across Queensland. Without decisive action the steep and unavoidable decline in water and wastewater standards will continue. The LGAQ warn that regional communities are facing a looming water infrastructure challenge, both in terms of supply and treatment.

All Queenslanders deserve access to clean, secure and affordable water and wastewater services. It is clear that far more needs to be done to assist local government to secure these essential services for their communities, but it is also clear that the Palaszczuk Labor government budget has not addressed the looming infrastructure challenge, nor has it addressed the looming water shortage challenge. As such, without action in relation to this matter, the Palaszczuk Labor government is destined to go down in history as the government that killed communities by thirst.

