




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 24 October 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Drought, Water Supply

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.48 pm): When Dorothea Mackellar penned those famous words 'I love a sunburnt country ... Of droughts and flooding rains,' it is clear that she had Queensland in mind. The drought across 66 per cent of Queensland is biting hard on our domestic water supplies across the state. We are desperately in need of those flooding rains that Dorothea wrote about.

The situation is dire, with 14 communities projected to run out of drinking water by Christmas. More communities are joining that list, sadly, as the future rainfall forecast is not promising. Furthermore, communities in the Gladstone, Gympie, Isaac, Southern Downs and Toowoomba regional council areas are facing critical supply levels. Some, like Cecil Plains and Miriam Vale, have three to four months of drinking water. These communities are already carting water in from other sources. We see in major regional towns like Stanthorpe, Warwick and Goondiwindi that councils are working overtime to find additional water sources. For towns like Warwick, it is not feasible to cart water because of the population size. Many other droughted communities are on strict water restrictions.

It is hard to find alternative supplies, all of which are expensive for ratepayers. Understandably, as a result of the drought, the economies of these communities are taking a hit. The angst and the human cost are mounting day by day. There are families who just cannot afford to continually purchase water from council standpipes. There is a water infrastructure cliff with supplies and the cliff is here. Local governments at the coalface are acutely aware of these supply problems. They are also aware that not enough has been done by this Labor government, and local governments have been warning of these consequences. Years of drought conditions combined with the abolition by Labor of the smaller communities assistance package for water infrastructure certainly have not helped. Much of the water infrastructure across Queensland is reaching an age when it needs significant repair or refurbishment. No wonder we are seeing domestic water shortages in communities.

Without decisive action, the steep and unavoidable decline in water will continue. The Palaszczuk Labor government cannot keep kicking this into the long grass because in this drought there is no grass left to kick into. Queensland communities are on the edge of that water infrastructure cliff and the Palaszczuk Labor government has no plan to address the need for essential water and sewerage services. It is clear that Labor's priorities are all wrong. The release of water from the Paradise Dam and the downsizing of the Rookwood Weir are met with dismay by Queenslanders, who are paying the high price of the Palaszczuk Labor government's inaction on water.