



Speech by

**JEFF KNUTH**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Hansard 5 August 1998

**SPORTING SHOOTERS**

**Mr KNUTH** (Burdekin—ONP) (6.33 p.m.): It is my pleasure to support the original motion before the House, which was moved by the member for Keppel. I remind this House that the police say that there are at least 700,000 firearm enthusiasts in Queensland. That is a lot of firearm owners—a lot of people to whom this Government should pay attention.

I think that it is significant that almost half of that large number of citizens do not register their firearms or have a licence for them. They have simply opted out of the system. Even more significant is that a large number of those firearm owners have remained loyal to the Labor Party. However, they are fast losing confidence in the Labor Party they knew.

**Mr Mackenroth** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** The member laughs, but he should wait until the next election. The Labor Party is showing little support for firearm owners. Today, many sporting shooters are asking if the Beattie Government is going to continue to ignore them and the many firearm associations that represent them by continuing to back John Howard's unworkable and failed firearm policies which he forced upon this State.

In all logic, I cannot see how the Beattie Government can refuse to make land available for firing ranges. They are of strategic importance to Australia. They have been the backbone of training for our gold medal-winning Olympians, our marksmen in two world wars and in several police actions. Firing ranges are a vital support for national defence. In all sincerity, the Beattie minority Government owes it to the people of Queensland to supply firing ranges, as was pledged by the previous coalition Government.

It will take many years for this Parliament to live down the knee-jerk laws which were passed by this House last year. In that regard, I commend the member for Gladstone for standing against the political tide. The laws are unworkable, ill-conceived and a knee-jerk reaction lumbered on Queensland without adequate deliberation.

A large part of Labor's vote now hangs in the balance. It hangs on how Labor handles this important issue of firing ranges. Will the Government again ignore these voters and supporters? I am happy to support the original motion.

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