



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard 5 August 1998

SPORTING SHOOTERS

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (6.23 p.m.): I rise to support the member for Keppel's motion. I am extremely concerned about the proceedings here tonight, because there was some indication that we may have obtained the legal advice that was provided to the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources. We have not seen that legal advice. Was he referring to some legal advice that he produced himself or some legal advice that the department had produced? What legal advice was he talking about when he was refuting the claims that were made by the member for Keppel? We are not clear about that.

When the Premier was Leader of the Opposition, he was quite clear about his intentions in relation to the use of State forests and Crown land by sporting shooters. His legal training would have enabled him to assess the situation. He was of the opinion that there was no problem whatsoever in terms of forest areas and Crown land. That was quite clear; yet the Minister has referred to legal advice that refutes that opinion. We do not really know where the Minister is coming from. Is it that the Minister does not want to do it? Is he trying to avoid the situation? What is it that he is trying to do? Is he creating a furphy about the advisory panel? Will he steer them off in another direction? It is important to understand clearly what the Minister's intention is.

There is a definite need for shooting complexes, particularly in the coastal area north of Brisbane. I believe that is quite important. I was prepared to do something about providing a site in a plantation forest. I had spoken to some of the sporting shooters about that site. That would have provided a complex for all those sporting shooters up to and beyond the electorate of Nicklin, about which we have just heard the member speak. I am sure the former member of Nicklin, who was a strong advocate of the need for such facilities, would have supported such a recreational facility for shooters. The age-old sport of shooting is very important to many people in this State.

In my electorate, there are currently two major areas of concern. There is a sporting shooters range at Kurrimine Beach, but the tenure of the land is very questionable. It is on a permit to occupy. Certainly the sporting shooters in that region are very concerned. I opened that complex in 1992. The insecurity that is now being caused by that permit to occupy does not augur well for their future. The pistol club in Innisfail lost the land on which it was conducting its shooting. It is very interested in securing an area that adjoins the sporting shooters area at Kurrimine Beach. They have made application for a lease on that area. It would be sensible to provide a lease for a range of disciplines to cater for the future needs of recreational shooters. There is no point in having small isolated pockets of particular disciplines all over the State. One might cater for a trapshooting discipline, another for a big-bore shooting discipline and another for a small-bore shooting discipline. It makes good sense to have a combined complex. I was working in that direction with people in my electorate.

A similar situation prevails in Ingham. We were seeking a suitable site for a sporting shooters range. The planning was not as well advanced as in Innisfail. Of course, there is the historic rifle range at Halifax. That is a rifle range for the big bores. It has existed for over a century. That does not lend itself to any extensions for other shooting disciplines. The area of land that the club has under its jurisdiction is insufficient and would not provide the wide range of disciplines that are indicated for the other shooters in the Herbert River district. It makes good sense to accommodate many of those shooters in one complex. The safety issues are particularly important. That was mentioned by our shadow Minister. Of course, the administration issues are also very relevant. If commonsense prevails, we would enable many of the sporting shooters in this State to access land that is not being used for any specific purpose, whether that land is in a State forest, on Crown land or wherever.