



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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RURAL COMMUNITIES

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.27 p.m.): In the short time remaining, I would like to tell the House about a number of the very important needs of some of the rural communities in the northern downs and the Burnett areas of Queensland. Recently, as shadow Minister for Rural Communities and shadow Minister for State Development and Trade, along with the shadow Minister for Mines and Energy, Mr Rob Mitchell, I visited a number of those towns: Yarraman, Kingaroy, Dalby, Chinchilla, Miles and Millmerran. We were overwhelmed by the desire of people in those rural communities to see within their community the solid platform of a power station to provide not only the jobs that come with the construction of the power station but ultimately the permanent jobs that remain once the power station is completed.

The first place that we visited was Yarraman. It was instructive to talk to the local shopkeepers and people from the historical society and to learn of their desire to have a 200-bed jail built in the Yarraman/Nanango area. That would be of great benefit to both of those towns. There are a number of empty houses in those towns. The towns are crying out for the 60 to 80 jobs that would flow from the construction of the jail, particularly as the employees would live locally. One can imagine what 60 to 80 permanent jobs in Yarraman/Nanango would do to the financial base of those districts, whose fortunes fluctuate according to the weather. Because the families of those employees would relocate, that would probably require another teacher and create a need for further police or ambulance officers. That is the sort of action that Governments can take to provide some stability for those townships.

Sadly, with the defeat of the coalition Government at the last election, the chances of Yarraman getting that jail have diminished dramatically. Labor has indicated that it wants to build one 600-bed jail in the Brisbane or south-east Queensland area. Already we are seeing the misfortune befalling the people of the South Burnett following the loss of good coalition government.

It is absolutely essential that this Government is committed to creating jobs in rural communities such as Yarraman and Nanango through the provision of infrastructure such as jails. In the minute that I have left to me, I want to speak about three major projects involving mining and a power station. The first is north Tarong, which would be an extension of the Tarong Power Station; the second is Wilkie Creek and Kogan Creek in the Chinchilla area; and the third one is the Intergen project at Millmerran. All of those rural communities desperately want to get those projects. However, all we see is the Labor Government pushing those projects into the background. Those rural communities are being sold out by a Labor Government that has no interest in anything that is located away from the coastline and no interest in anything that is located outside the south-east corner. With the brownouts that we are expecting to occur this year as a result of Labor doing nothing in its first six years of Government, it is absolutely essential that these projects receive maximum consideration and that they are allowed to proceed in a free and competitive way.

Time expired.
