



Speech by

**Hon. R. SCHWARTEN**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Hansard 5 August 1998

### **SPORTING SHOOTERS**

**Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (6.28 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by my colleague the Minister for Environment and Minister for Natural Resources. I am probably one of the few people on this side of the House who has a fair bit of experience in gun ownership and who is a long-term member of a Queensland rifle association. This motion is the greatest waste of the House's time that I have ever seen.

**Mr Mackenroth:** How many guns did you own?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I had a very handsome collection of 40-odd; but, unfortunately, I do not have that many any more. I might add that I did not have to surrender any.

The reality is that there is no issue here tonight. I can prove that. I refer to something that I would have thought the honourable shadow Minister would have known about, because it is slap-bang in the middle of his electorate. It is an application by the Capricorn shooters, who are very familiar with the honourable member for Keppel. They have come to see him and they have come to see me. They have been trying for years to be relocated. In Rockhampton, the Commonwealth—and this has nothing to do with the gun laws—closed and sold off the old rifle range, so those people did not have a home to go to, including my own Railway Frenchville rifle club.

At the time, the State Government offered a parcel of land. Thankfully, the Borbidge Government took up that matter as well. There is now going to be a very good complex located between Rockhampton and Gladstone that will fulfil most people's needs. However, those people decided that they do not want to go there. That is an issue for them. They have been looking for a site, and have looked at 24 sites. They tried to acquire a freehold site down on the Yeppoon Road in Pine Mountain. There have been objections to that and the matter will be decided by the court.

This is a very complex issue for these people, because there are not many parcels of land available for them. However, when this issue was raised with me 12 months ago, I gave it my support. I know that the member for Keppel did the same thing. I have the briefing notice on this issue. It is the same parcel of land and the recommendations are still the same. There is no hint whatsoever that there was an attempt to pull the rug out from under these people on this parcel of land.

This motion is an atrocious waste of time and a feeble attempt to jump on the gun bandwagon agenda upon which some members of this House think that they were elected. In relation to that agenda and as a gun owner myself, I say to those members to be very careful about calling for a referendum on gun ownership. I do not want to have to give up my guns. If those members persist with their calls for a referendum on the issue, they might find that the majority of people of Queensland do not support people having guns at all.

**Mr Knuth:** The right of self-defence.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** No, I said the right to have guns. If the member is fair dinkum about listening to people on gun ownership, I say that if a referendum is held, then he might not like how he would get on.

I also want to talk about the plantation forests. I do not know whether the former Primary Industries Minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, knows much about the timber industry. However, I can assure him that those timber workers have no joy at all in running a saw blade through a piece of slash pine that has a nice, big 7.62 round in the middle of it. When I was the shadow Minister for Natural Resources, members of the timber industry saw me and said that they were very concerned about a carte blanche approval being given. Commonsense must apply, and it is being applied. We must review these situations, and that is what the Minister is doing.

The reality is that this is not an issue and that this motion is a disgraceful waste of the time of this House. There is no alternative for anybody with any sense whatsoever than to endorse the sentiments of my colleague the member for Everton, the Minister for Natural Resources. It is simply just an issue with which the Opposition has tried to score a few political points. It has come unstuck over it. It is just playing old, bad politics with it. The Opposition has failed with it. I have evidence right here in my hand that the Opposition is wrong.

**Mr Borbidge:** Three weeks as a Minister and you are out of touch already.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** No, the Leader of the Opposition is completely out of touch. That is why he is sitting opposite. That is why 15% of the people of Queensland voted for the National Party.

Time expired.

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