



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 1 December 1999

TOWNSVILLE INDUSTRIAL PARK

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): I must say that one honourable member of this House has suggested that tonight I might be suggesting that rather than this project go ahead in Townsville or in Bowen it should go ahead in Cairns, but that will not be my contention.

I rise to support the amendment to the motion because regional economic development—and that is what we are talking about tonight—is really hard. It is much harder than identifying a suitable block of land and for Government to put up a sign and say, "Here, please." It does not work like that. In fact, I am sure that more experienced members of the House than I who have worked in regional areas attempting to find ways forward for communities would admit that it is a much more complex business than that and that an essential element to proper regional development is a substantial period of planning; a very clear analysis not only on the part of Government, but of all stakeholders in the community of the strengths and weaknesses of that area and of the threats and opportunities; and the complete involvement not only of the business stakeholders—the private sector and the potential investors—but also of the community. That is really what we need to talk about tonight in terms of Townsville, Bowen, Cairns and other places.

However, it is common—and I admit that this has occurred in Cairns as well as elsewhere—that several red herrings distract us from the proper path of determining appropriate industrial and other economic solutions to increase jobs in regional areas. One of these is the "grass is greener" phenomenon: looking at a community up the road or across the road and saying, for example, "They have an international airport and that is part of their success. Let us have one, too. That might be the answer for our community." As much as it would be ridiculous for Cairns, for example, to aspire to copy Townsville's success as an industrial city, then so, too, it is for smaller communities. Instead of focusing on what may appear to be greener pastures in other cities, particularly for Bowen at this time, they should instead concentrate on their own competitive advantages—on what is particularly appropriate in that area.

The other red herring that is raised and that must be managed—and I do offer my respects to the member for Burdekin for his attempts to manage it—is the not in my backyard phenomenon: the people who are concerned about their plot of land and will not or cannot have regard to the broader picture, that of the success of their community, of where economic development can occur and where growth in jobs can occur. I dare suggest to members of this House that not only do I not have the expertise to decide for the people of Townsville or the people of Bowen where industrial land should be placed, but neither does the member for Burdekin. It is simple politics—superficial politics—for any one of the members of this honourable House to point to the land and suggest that we are so clever as to have the solution. In fact, the exercise is much more complex and will only be successful if all of the stakeholders are involved.

I dare suggest also to honourable members that we have some extra issues to take account of in the nineties. One of these is the definition of "industrial land". Previously it had been thought of generally as land set aside for noxious, noisy or heavy industries. These days we need to think of industrial land as land for smart industries: biotechnology, information technology, export of education and environmental management—quite different kinds of industries.

I think, too—and I would like to give recognition to the people of Bowen, particularly those on the council—that the other important issue is that it is community driven; that it comes with genuine energy and determination from the grassroots members of the community—not just from the council and not just from the local member. Essentially it must involve their own local chambers of commerce and industrial and other business organisations. It is that working together, that plodding period of planning that will help Bowen in the end to be successful in finding new ways forward for economic development and jobs, just as it will be for Townsville, Cairns and all the other regional centres of Queensland. That is my encouragement to the member for Burdekin: instead of making decisions for the people, albeit with the best of intentions, I encourage him to go and do the hard yards of working with—

Time expired.
