



Speech by

HARRY BLACK

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Hansard 1 December 1999

TOWNSVILLE INDUSTRIAL PARK

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—ONP) (6.11 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Burdekin. This is a commonsense motion, with so many positives that it should be impossible for any logically thinking member to vote against it, particularly those Labor members—

Mr Robertson: Let's move it to Airlie Beach. I bet that will be popular.

Mr BLACK: We are not talking about Airlie Beach.

Mr Robertson: I thought you were from Airlie Beach.

Mr BLACK: I am from an area—

Mr Robertson: You represent Airlie Beach.

Mr BLACK: I represent an area of 14,000 square kilometres.

Mr Knuth: He represents Bowen, too.

Mr BLACK: I represent Bowen. How big an area does the member for Sunnybank represent?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! I suggest that the honourable member address the Chair. If he wants to take an interjection from the member for Sunnybank, he may do so, but he must do it through the Chair.

Mr BLACK: The member for Burdekin has told this House that the logic behind siting this project at Woodstock is flawed. There are some reasons why it is a poor site and there is overwhelming evidence that the people of that community do not want it there.

On the other hand, the people of the Bowen area want it. They deserve it, because their area is desperately seeking employment opportunities to retain their economic viability. In addition, the project has a much greater chance of success owing to numerous factors, many of which have been identified in a 1998 economic development strategy commissioned by the Bowen Shire and conducted by the highly regarded management consultants Gibson and Associates. The strategy has been developed following extensive consultation with and input from the community itself. It represents an expression of the community's vision for their region. With the enthusiastic backing of the community, a project of this nature is assured of success.

The community support is there, as is suitable Government owned land—3,000 hectares of it—which is more than adequate to accommodate the industries identified. Considering the job losses that have occurred because of recent shutdowns in the area, the labour is available. With a population that is currently around 14,000, the shire is close to falling below the critical mass needed to maintain a full range of services and to allow sustainable economic growth.

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Burdekin has made his speech. He should let the member for Whitsunday be heard.

Mr BLACK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Port Abbot is there. It is a high-capacity port that has the potential for massive expansion at minimal cost. An industrial area right at its doorstep would provide certainty to the future viability of this facility. The road and rail links are there. Abbot Point is linked to the Newlands and Collinsville mines by a modern railway line, which can be extended through

to the northern Bowen Basin, taking pressure off the Hay Point line which is currently experiencing heavy traffic. It would also provide an alternative route. The power is there. Collinsville is in close proximity and the potential for gas from the Bowen Basin could facilitate further development.

Additional high volumes of water to the Bowen Shire are indeed feasible. A two-year study, which is due for completion in the second half of 2000, identifies the potential for harvesting the Burdekin and adjacent rivers. Possibilities include a storage on the Don River, the Urannah Dam, and the extension of the Elliott main channel to Bowen, which has been on the books of both major parties for the past 19 years.

The advantages of any of these projects extend far beyond supplying water to the proposed industrial estate. An upgraded water supply would provide ancillary benefits in the form of irrigation potential for thousands of hectares of prime farming land. This spin-off benefit would provide a tremendous boost to the local economies and provide even more jobs.

In relation to the siting of this project, simple commonsense can make the difference between success and failure. Simple commonsense can prevent a whole community from being imposed upon. Simple commonsense can mean jobs in a community that desperately needs jobs. Presently, the Bowen Shire has a volatile and fragile economy. However, in the long term, the shire stands to benefit from any future export growth. As identified by Gibson and Associates, the future economic success of the Bowen Shire lies in the export of agricultural, fishing and mining products. In addition, a solid manufacturing sector will provide a future for the families of Bowen and the surrounding district.

The people of the Bowen and Collinsville areas deserve this chance. If the Government really means what it says, if the Government is fair dinkum about caring for rural and regional communities—

Time expired.
