



Speech by

JEFF KNUTH

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard 27 May 1999

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES FOR RURAL YOUTH

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—IND) (7.22 p.m.): Tonight I would like to outline the differences between facilities and activities available to youth in south-east Queensland compared with their counterparts in north Queensland. Children who live in this area of the State have a plethora of options when it comes to recreational ways to spend their spare time. Little more than one hour's drive from here are four major theme parks and some of the best surfing areas in Queensland. There are skateboard parks, youth centres, concert venues and quality sporting facilities located throughout the south-east corner.

I do not for a minute begrudge the facilities that the youth of Brisbane and surrounding cities and towns have at their disposal. However, I am concerned that, while the Government waxes lyrical about its belief in families and says that it is horrified at the rural youth suicide rate, it is trying to strip another recreational pastime from the youth and families of north Queensland's coastal and rural towns. I refer to attempts to rid the coast of fishing huts and the immense enjoyment of overnight fishing trips that they embody.

When boredom is said to be a factor in rural suicides, why is the Department of Natural Resources destroying one of the few healthy, clean and relaxing family traditions that exist on the northern coast? The vast majority of creek huts are used by families who act responsibly when they take their children on fishing excursions. What are we saying to our youth and north Queensland families if they are evicted from their beloved weekenders when the huts are handed over to the Environmental Protection Agency? Are we saying, "Here kids, go and play some computer games or watch some violent videos instead of wetting the line outdoors for the weekend"?

I call on the Minister for Natural Resources to consider seriously the social importance of the fishing huts at Rocky Ponds in the Burdekin. I understand that those huts are to come under the control of the Environmental Protection Agency and it must be a priority of the agency to ensure that the hut owners are issued with some form of permit to occupy to safeguard their valued pastime.

Time expired.
