



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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PLANT PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (4.30 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Plant Protection Amendment Bill, I want to comment on the importance of biosecurity to Queensland. I agree with the minister's comments in the state parliament on 17 August 2004 when he stated that the state government will strengthen its armour to eradicate introduced plant diseases and pests. He said that the impact of introduced diseases and pests on Queensland and Australian industries can be enormous if a timely and effective response is obstructed. He also said that the government is committed to plant biosecurity but it needs certainty from strong legislation to apply the appropriate eradication measures where necessary.

I believe this also relates to the issue of biosecurity and the appropriate measures that the government would put in place in towns like Alpha, which does not have a stock inspector. The member for Gregory raised this issue last night. I know the minister is aware that the recent outbreaks of citrus canker in Emerald caused huge demand on DPI staff, including stock inspectors. A stock inspector based in Alpha, the minister would have to agree, would be of great importance to prevent any outbreaks of animal and other diseases.

Prevention is the best form of eradication, and when we look at a tick line that extends right through the southern and north-western parts of my electorate, it is of great concern that stock inspectors are being replaced with third-party providers. Third-party providers do not have the power to deter truck loads of cattle that are bypassing the dip, and they are not qualified to monitor and report diseases and stock movement. The prevention of the spread of cattle tick and other diseases into western Queensland is an extremely high priority. The township of Alpha, which dips an average of 25,000 head of cattle per year plus sprays approximately 900 horses, has no stock inspector because of a funding shortfall. This is an insult considering that a multimillion-dollar industry is being placed in jeopardy because the government is too lousy to provide a stock inspector.

This government says that it is committed to biosecurity and the prevention of introduced diseases and pests in Queensland and Australian industries. If that is the case, a stock inspector in Alpha needs to be a government priority. Overall, I agree with the minister's second reading speech and I commend this bill to the House.