



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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WESTERN QUEENSLAND LIVESTOCK SPELLING FACILITY

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): I would like to draw the attention of the Minister for Transport to the need to reassess the suitability and cost effectiveness of the current livestock spelling facility in western Queensland. Rail has for many years been the transport method of choice for the grazing industry, largely due to its assessability, its cost effectiveness and the great service provided by Queensland Rail. However, Queensland Rail and the state government need to acknowledge the huge drop in clientele and the consequential drop in income. They need to review the current system and make the necessary changes to ensure that rail livestock options are maintained for the benefit of not only the grazing industry but also Queensland Rail and the state government. For example, Charters Towers and the Dalrymple shire are the hub of the grazing industry, with more than 100,000 cattle going through the yards each year. Because there is no spelling facility in Charters Towers, the core users of this Queensland Rail service—graziers—are choosing to truck livestock and bypass areas like Charters Towers.

This all means a huge decrease in revenue for Queensland Rail and the state government. It makes commonsense to locate a spelling facility in Charters Towers which has the support of the local shire council, which is committed to maintaining the cattle yards, assisting with the installation of the new NLIS and, to the best of my knowledge, which is willing to negotiate some other costs with Queensland Rail to ensure Charters Towers rail yards are fully utilised.

If the current system is not meeting the needs of the clients, the system must be changed. We need to ensure that revenue is not being wasted because the best systems are not in place. Local graziers and the local shire council are of the belief that a spelling facility located at Charters Towers would bring significant benefits to the region and save massive costs for Queensland Rail.

The cost savings for Queensland Rail would be having no liability towards the maintenance and upkeep of the yard and other infrastructure. All cost in this would be borne by the council as a facility provider, and human resources and operational costs would decrease as rail wagons would be stored at Charters Towers. As such, no requirement would exist for crews to truck wagons. I call on the Minister for Transport to look into this matter as it is an efficient and viable option, and it will bring great benefits to this region.