



Speech by

Shane Knuth

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WATER INFRASTRUCTURE, MORANBAH

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (11.51 a.m.): Today the issue which I wish to speak on is one that I have spoken about many times before, that is, the desperate need in the Moranbah mining region for a solid, reliable water infrastructure. Moranbah and the surrounding districts produce \$6 billion in gross revenue annually and contribute millions of dollars to the state coffers, and yet year after year the mines and residents go through what can almost be described as a crisis. There has been a massive expansion in the coal industry, coupled with the population growth of a property boom that includes single men's quarters that cater for hundreds of mine employees, and yet there is not enough water to cater for this boom.

Every year residents are facing severe water restrictions. There is a ban on all sprinklers and soaker hoses. Residents can water their plants only by hand-held hoses between the hours of 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. Outside these hours, hoses must be disconnected from taps. Penalties are imposed for people who fail to abide by these restrictions. There are reports of potential mine shutdowns if there is no decent rainfall this year. This is a very serious issue as these mines continue to expand. SunWater identified a dam sight on the Isaac River, and the estimated cost of the dam is \$50 million—peanuts when one considers the revenue gained by the state government in royalty payments and freight profits, and this will only increase with the coal expansion plans.

The community is extremely concerned that the mines will cease to operate because of the water crisis. The government must come out and tell the Moranbah people what their expected plans are for the town and in the future so that the water problems can be alleviated. No longer can the government rely on intermittent rainfall, especially when there is a high chance that there will be a severe deficiency in the annual rainfall this year.

To solve the dilemma, the government needs to work with the council and mines, and build the people of Moranbah a reliable, constant water supply. The Premier stated earlier in his ministerial statement that the massive increase in export coal in Queensland is because of careful planning. There has been little to no careful planning from this government regarding water infrastructure in the Moranbah region. This government can spend millions of dollars on footbridges, sports stadiums and car races but cannot invest money back into the hand that feeds them.

Mr Lucas: Is that right?

Mr KNUTH: That is true.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr KNUTH: Six billion dollars in gross revenue and there could be a possible mine closure because the government will not invest money into water infrastructure in a vital region for jobs.

I, along with the residents of the Moranbah mining community, want to know what the Premier and his Natural Resources Minister's plans are for the water infrastructure in the region. They want to know whether the Premier and his minister value the jobs, the people, the region and its economies. They want to know what they are going to do in regard to water infrastructure; otherwise this will continue on year after year.