



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Tuesday, 9 August 2005

HOUSING AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (8.27 pm): I support the Housing and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2005. However, while lending support to the bill, I would like to bring to the attention of the minister the housing problems in Moranbah and in other areas. It seems like every time I am in parliament I talk about the lack of housing in the township of Moranbah, but I have to continue to do so until a satisfactory solution is found. Considering the millions of dollars the government receives in royalties and freight charges from mining activities around the town, there is very little given in return.

The town cannot cope with the rapid growth in the mining activity that has occurred. Miners are working in Moranbah but their families are living in Mackay or other surrounding towns, living in dongas, because there is no accommodation in Moranbah for their families. Business cannot employ apprentices because they cannot get accommodation. Companies are struggling to attract qualified professionals to Moranbah because of the distinct lack of suitable accommodation. Every economic and social activity in the town has been frustrated due to the lack of appropriate accommodation. Recently, the local shire council approved a 350-resident development, although I am led to believe that the government does not support it. However, I would like to congratulate the council for its foresight. This development and its future scope will help to permanently relieve the intolerable social, environmental and economic constraints being experienced by the people in the region and its key stakeholders. The demand for a development of this magnitude is extremely high.

The lack of accommodation is a matter of great concern for local churches and social organisations within the town. Moranbah has a mixed socioeconomic group. There are waiting lists of up to 40 people for private rentals and there are even waiting lists for the caravan parks. Currently, private rentals are fetching up to \$600 per week.

I am led to believe that the Department of Housing has been selling off public homes to fill the state Treasury coffers. Premier Beattie has stated publicly that coal is black gold. That is fine, but why is the department selling public homes in mining areas when it should be providing them? There are no dedicated housing department staff in Moranbah to assist people and to manage properties. Why are public housing issues in Moranbah dealt with by Department of Housing staff based in Mackay, when Moranbah is suffering a housing crisis? We need a dedicated officer to work within the township.

I have been told of a lady who was renting a house that was sold, and she had nowhere to go. She found a Department of Housing home that had been vacant for four months but she could not contact anyone within the department who could help her. She had to contact staff in Mackay, which is 200 kilometres away—staff who would not have a clue what is going on in Moranbah.

Single parents who were renting homes that have been sold have no other choice but to leave town or live in caravans parked in other people's backyards. The government needs to set aside a program to provide units and housing for all sectors. It is about time that this government gave back to the hand that feeds it. This is a big issue and it is appropriate to bring it before the House.