



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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QUEENSLAND COMPETITION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (2.44 pm): The Premier has stated—

The first component of the bill amends the state's third party access regime framework to ensure the state's competition framework is keeping pace with the multitude of contractual relationships utilised by modern business. The state's third party access regime establishes a legal right for competing firms to share certain infrastructure services. This enhances competition and benefits Queensland consumers.

I feel that at this present moment this is an important issue. I had a meeting at Clermont with the Blair Athol mine manager and his concern was that they are actually decreasing production because they cannot get their coal out to Abbot Point and Dalrymple Bay quick enough. They are decreasing production but the mine is extending for another year. I do not believe that this is good for the local economy and local business. I believe that it is very important that that missing railway link between Goonyella and Newlands mine is built to take pressure off one particular harbour.

As members would be aware, that region produces over \$6 billion in gross revenue. I believe that is a very important issue. It also provides about \$1 billion to the government in state revenue. I quote again—

Under arrangements where an infrastructure owner contracts out the operation of infrastructure, the bill ensures:

... the state's regulator is able to enforce access undertakings and manage access disputes directly against access providers, when they are not the owners of facilities, without having to rely on contractual provisions in agreements between an owner and an access provider.

I believe that this is an important issue. Being a railway employee for 19 years I actually played a part in building many access lines and opening up new lines. Our fathers and forefathers built Queensland Rail. It is through their work and toil that it has been a wonderful service provider for rural and regional Queensland in the past. I still cannot see the logic that we have built a railway track, Queensland Rail employs Queensland Rail employees to maintain that track, to keep it up to scratch, and yet there are now other companies that can ride over Queensland Rail tracks. I just cannot see the logic in that. It is a state government asset; it is Queensland Rail. We built it and then we have these other companies that say they can compete and can haul coal and containerised freight cheaper than Queensland Rail. Meanwhile we are paying for the upkeep of this rail.

I wish to provide an example. My partner and I buy a cattle property. We fence it, put in dams, provide the infrastructure, pay the rates and so on. Another company comes along and puts its cattle on our property, does not pay for the upkeep and does not pay for the fences. All of a sudden it says that it is competing against us and it sells its cattle cheaper than our cattle. Well, of course they will be able to compete because they are not paying for the upkeep or the expenses. This is exactly the same as what is happening in relation to Queensland Rail at this present moment.