



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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WILD RIVERS BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (8.25 pm): I do not support this legislation. I for one and the Nationals believe that economic development and ecological sustainability can, and do, go hand in hand. Rivers are, and traditionally have been, our most valuable asset. For generations they have supplied water to our communities and our industries as well as providing recreational and cultural opportunities. According to the wild rivers legislation, a percentage of Queensland rivers will be so-called protected from mining, agricultural development and other development. The real issue is that the legislation will prevent Queenslanders benefitting from sustainable development and benefitting from Queensland resources. Under this legislation the rivers will not be protected. Even if rivers are locked up, they will still be under the curse of introduced species, both flora and fauna. One only has to look at the poorly managed national parks that have become a breeding ground for wild dogs, feral pigs, weeds and other ecologically damaging species to see the damage that this government has caused through its belief of extreme preservation.

Agriculture is the biggest thorn in the government's side for perverse and incorrect reasons. Graziers and farmers are not the environmental thugs that this government would have us believe they are. The graziers and farmers' entire existence depends on their ability to manage their land. They have taken huge financial and personal risks to develop and manage their land for their existence.

I want to bring to members' attention the Gilbert River mango plantation in the southern gulf, which has over 15,000 mango trees. It employs up to 100 people. In the southern gulf there are crocodiles and wild pigs. The plantation is located beside a river system. This legislation will prevent Aboriginal communities from planting a mango plantation.

Mining is the most regulated activity in the modern world. Companies develop rehabilitation plans and environmental impact statements at great expense to ensure that a mining area, after it is mined, is returned as close as possible to its original state. It is difficult to identify a rehabilitated mining area from an area that has never been mined. Companies are environmentally aware of and are conscious of the need to protect the natural surroundings.

This government is quite determined to stop any sort of development occurring outside the south-east corner. It reaps in billions of dollars from mining and agricultural industries, but it has no respect for the people who participate in these industries. The government has neither respect for these people's knowledge nor for their ability to manage and create places where not only industries flourish but also where the environment is adequately looked after.

I will be supporting the amendments to be moved by the shadow minister for natural resources. Those amendments will ensure that the protection and preservation of Queensland rivers is achieved with economic and social considerations taken into account. The amendments will encourage sustainable resource development within frameworks designed to retain the natural life of the rivers. The amendments will also deliver greater certainty to communities affected by this draconian legislation with a clear indication of a time frame for a moratorium and will provide for wild river declarations to be made by regulations. They will allow sufficient time for consultation with the communities and stakeholders without

creating a situation where rivers are tied up for no perceived reason. They will also create a situation where the process is transparent and understandable for those who are affected.

Our rivers are a necessary part of our economy, environment and culture. It is imperative that we get this legislation right to ensure that our rivers remain an integral part of not only our environment but also our economy.