



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Wednesday, 5 October 2005

MORANBAH

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.03 pm): It is my great honour to speak at the regional parliament in Rockhampton. This is a great opportunity to bring up rural and regional issues. I note the member for Keppel's boast of his support for the regional parliament because his government cares for all of Queensland. I have to dispute those comments, because this government could not care less about the township of Moranbah. The region produces over \$6 billion a year in gross revenue and fills the state government's Treasury with up to \$1 billion in royalties.

This government has given nothing back to congratulate Moranbah on its efforts—not even the crumbs off Brisbane's table. Year after year Moranbah has suffered water restrictions and for 15 years has been calling for a dam. The best that this government can offer is to praise the mine for its initiative to build a pipeline from the Burdekin Dam, which will not provide water to the township anyway.

At a public meeting this week attended by a large gathering of concerned residents, serious concerns were raised about the government calling in a 350-residence development. Something is seriously wrong when a town of over 8,000 people cannot expand a few yards out from its perimeter to help solve the intolerable social, environmental and economic constraints that are being experienced by the people of Moranbah. This situation is so ridiculous. There have been proposals to use recreational and sporting areas to accommodate residential blocks and single men's quarters.

The calling in of this residential development was believed to be aimed at further enhancing the prospects of the open-cut mine to be developed a few kilometres from the town's doorstep. While we are all for coalmining and recognise the contribution that coalmining makes to its workers, their families and the community, a fine line needs to be drawn between expanding mining operations close to a township and protecting the quality of life of mining town residents. Families want an assurance that they can live and enjoy the quality of life Moranbah has to offer without being subjected to contaminated dust, airborne silicone, excess noise, lights and health risks associated with a 24-hour mining operation at their doorstep. There is concern for asthmatics and people with ailing conditions and the effect contaminated dust will have inundating homes. There is also fear that local residents would leave the mining town in droves if a proposed open-cut mine in the vicinity of the township goes ahead, leaving Moranbah a ghost town.

Moranbah is not just a mining town; it is a town where people are retiring, raising their children—a place they call home. The Premier proudly passed his wild rivers legislation to preserve and protect rivers from development within a kilometre of the river systems. I ask the Premier and the minister: what are they going to do to preserve and protect the quality of life of Moranbah residents and their families?