



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (11.41 am): I rise to speak to the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill as there are a few issues that I believe are very important. This bill deals with freehold land, and I believe that the vegetation management legislation is draconian and takes away landowners' rights to manage their land.

Mr Nuttall: What is the relevance to the bill?

Mr KNUTH: Yes, I am speaking to the bill.

Mr Nuttall: What clause?

Mr Seeney: Don't take any notice of them. You always pick on the weak ones, don't you, Gordon? You always pick on somebody else.

Ms Nolan: That is rich coming from you.

Mr Seeney: You sit there dumb and mute. Come and have a go at me and see how you go.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lee): Order! Member for Callide, please cease interjecting. I want to hear the member for Charters Towers.

Mr KNUTH: Freehold title is an important provision in this legislation. But there is an issue with regard to land-holders being tied up. They are required to provide a healthy and safe workplace environment for their workers. But this is very difficult when workers are trying to work cattle through stock gates and through troughs and the legislation requires that they can only clear five metres from a particular fence or gate. When the helicopters are moving in and pushing cattle through gates and the stock workers are pushing cattle through gates, it is virtually unworkable. I believe that the minister for natural resources needs to look at this because the workplace health and safety legislation requires employers to provide a safe environment for their employees. But that is virtually impossible with this legislation.

I would also like to raise the issue of flying foxes in Charters Towers.

Mr Shine: Oh, fair dinkum.

Mr KNUTH: I table a petition of over 3,000 signatures. I would not need to raise these issues if the permits that the council is asking for were provided by the state government. This issue was brought up five years ago. Five years later there are still 2,000 bats. I do not want to keep coming back and raising this issue, but I raise it because they are still there.

Ms Male: Talk to the council. They are the ones who have the control. It is their responsibility.

Mr KNUTH: That is right. But the state government issues the permits and the permits are absolutely useless. That is why the bats are still there. I would like to bring to the attention of members—this is a very important issue—the fact that the bats are still there because there are restrictions on the permits. The bats can only be harassed from 5 am to 9 in the morning or from 4.30 in the afternoon to 7.30 at night. Members have to listen to me very carefully: the council harasses the bats in the early hours of the morning when everybody is asleep or when mums are trying to get their children ready for school and they

hear the booms and bangs. All this is doing is lifting the flying foxes up, plonking them over the residents, and then after 9 o'clock—and this is very important—those bats cannot be touched. The bats are roosting amongst residents all day and we cannot touch them.

Ms NOLAN: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I ask you to consider whether these bats are relevant to this natural resources bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. But I ask all honourable members to keep their comments as close to the content of the bill as they can.

Mr KNUTH: I will say just one last thing: if we are given the permits to harass the bats in interim periods on and off throughout the day, we can push them to this tree and an hour later we can push them to that tree and we can work these bats out of town. With the present system it is costing the council an absolute fortune. The money, the resources and the energy that are being put into this are a complete waste of time and useless. That is why I say that this government needs to do something about these permits. The flying foxes are still there and will continue to be there if something is not done. Now they are talking about a bat habitat. It is impossible to move the bats to that bat habitat under the present permits that we have. I wanted to bring this before the House because this is an important issue. I will be coming back five years later and 10 years later if something is not done about this.