



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS**

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## **MINERAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (2.35 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Mineral Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The minister states that the bill is designed to provide the legislative framework to facilitate the development of the Aurukun bauxite resource in Cape York. The state is seeking to secure the development of a new bauxite mine and new downstream processing capacity in Queensland. The minister said the Aurukun project is a significant commercial development for Queensland which will provide long-term economic, social and financial benefits for the state and the local region, including Indigenous communities. Queensland stands to gain thousands of construction jobs and hundreds of long-term jobs for regional Queensland and a solid income stream to help pay for essential services such as health, education and police.

Aurukun is situated on three rivers—the Archer, the Ward and the Watson. I note in the minister's second reading speech on the Wild Rivers Bill he stated that the bill provides safeguards to ensure that any future development of these rivers and their catchments will be limited to those compatible with the preservation of the rivers' natural values. There was a concern from a number of shire councils that there are rules for some and rules for others. They noted that exemptions from application of the act were made for the Aurukun project and the PNG pipeline project.

We in rural and regional Queensland are very supportive of infrastructure developments and projects. It is wonderful to see that such a project is going to be developed in north Queensland. There needs to be a balance. If there is going to be one rule for one then it needs to be for all. If we look at the wild rivers, for example, we find that it is fine to develop them for mining, but mining companies do not go out of their way to protect the rivers. They protect the rivers when they are obliged to by legislation. However, the landowners are under no obligation to do it but they protect and preserve the river systems because it is their livelihood. The conservation movement is the one that works for the protection and preservation of the rivers. The very people that we are trying to kick out of areas in these river systems are the people who look after them.

Infrastructure development in rural and regional Queensland is vitally important. The south-east corner has infrastructure problems. The way to alleviate and solve those infrastructure problems is to provide for infrastructure development in rural and regional Queensland. That will stop people from leaving rural and regional areas and pouring into the south-east corner and putting pressure on the south-east corner. These projects are very important.

The minister stated yesterday that the agricultural industry produces over \$10 billion a year in gross revenue. That is very important. That part of the economy provides jobs.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr English): Order! I would ask the member to come back to the bill.

**Mr KNUTH:** We need to provide a balance between mineral resources and future farming. As I was saying, these mining companies are not obligated to look after the river. They are only obligated to do so by legislation.

Future mineral developments will be affected but landowners in the wild river catchment are also affected. At present they are denied the ability to improve pastures and to use fertilisers for weed control. There will be many mining projects in these wild river catchments in years to come. But shall we deny them the opportunity to expand or develop mineral resources because of the protection of the so-called wild rivers legislation? Landowners are also unable to use mechanical equipment.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr English): Order! At the start of this debate Mr Speaker gave a very clear ruling on this matter. I ask you to come back to the bill or I will sit you down.

**Mr KNUTH:** I am on the bill. I am stating the facts between mineral development and—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is a reflection on the chair. I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr KNUTH:** I withdraw those comments.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Come back to the bill in line with Mr Speaker's ruling.

**Mr KNUTH:** While I was on that subject, I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House. I believe that these issues need to be dealt with. While the honourable minister is in the chamber, I would also like to say that it is very important for mining development in rural and regional areas. I also have grave concerns about the fossickers who are unable to access some areas. It is very difficult for them to access areas to fossick for gold. That is their hobby. They have been kicked out of the state forests. I believe that we need to look after the interests of the fossickers, who will spend their time and energy searching for a few gold coins and a few nuggets. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.