



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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NATURE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (5.15 pm): This bill seeks to legislate a ban on recreational duck and quail hunting in Queensland. I believe this is a sad day for rural and regional Queensland. Duck hunting has long been a tradition in Queensland. It has been passed down through the generations. For years it has been a way of life for bush families who were brought up in this country. Those opposite may not understand this, but to many rural people this tradition is just as enjoyable as drinking a beer and boiling the billy.

Those opposite made mention of the contribution of the RSPCA. It was this organisation that made the effort to protect toads. I praise the member for Thuringowa when he that said that toads need a good wallop. This is an organisation that the government seeks advice and support from and that has the ear of the government.

While this government may at times show sympathy towards the toad, it takes a strong stance on these terrible duck hunters, but we have these flying foxes that have been flapping around for six years, roosting and living amongst residents' households, driving people up the wall, and I would like to see the government—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the member please come back to the substance of the bill.

Mr KNUTH: I would like to see someone take a strong stance to protect the people of Charters Towers. If a strong stance had been taken, those bats would have been gone five or six years ago.

Just because those opposite do not shoot ducks, does that give them a reason to stop everyone else from shooting ducks? I do not know what the hobbies of those opposite are—it may be birdwatching or sipping wine. I am not trying to stop those opposite from their hobby, so why should they try to stop everyone else from theirs?

I notice that the east coast fin fishery bill will be tabled in parliament next year. We can guarantee that it will be introduced and that the fishermen will be complaining because their rights will be taken from them, exactly like the rights of rural and regional Queensland. Duck shooting is something that has been practised for generations—

Mrs Sullivan: Does that make it right?

Mr KNUTH: Have those opposite ever shot a duck?

Mrs Sullivan: No.

Mr KNUTH: To many rural people duck hunting is a tradition that is as enjoyable as a beer and boiling the billy. Annual recreational duck and quail hunting seasons have been managed and are sustainable. They do not impact on the long-term survival of the species that are harvested. Also to be taken into consideration is the large number of man-made waterholes and dams that have increased the number of habitats for wild ducks.

Mrs Sullivan interjected.

Mr KNUTH: The member does not like it because it is the truth. In fact, recreational hunters maintain conservation work in swamps and wetlands to encourage the nesting of water birds. They contribute their own funds to this work and also apply for grants to ensure that wetlands do not become weed fields and pest ridden. They are conservationists. In fact, no expert is concerned with the decline in duck numbers. This bill is purely motivated so that the Beattie government can pander to the left-wing minority who do not fish, shoot, camp or get their hands dirty with real work.

I have grave concerns that the people who convinced the state government that duck and quail hunting is cruel and barbaric and should not be practised in the 21st century are the same people who are targeting recreational fishing and pig hunters on the same grounds. This is the same group of people who tried to stop Richmond's popular Hog'n'Dog day. Over 800 people turn up for this day. There are no sports stadiums at Richmond. Most of Richmond's race meetings have been closed. They do not have trains running on frequent schedules, but they have Hog'n'Dog day and they have the sympathy of the government. Fortunately, the government did not listen to the RSPCA on that issue.

The government does not understand rural Queensland. It does not understand bush culture. Duck shooting is what rural Queenslanders are brought up doing. It is something our grandfathers and great-grandfathers have handed down from generation to generation. It is a way of life that has continued to provide food on the table. Do members opposite know that we shot ducks and quail and that we ate ducks, rabbit and quail? We cannot do this now. We were once able to do this, but then this government decided to go down the track of 'we care'. It is not about the government caring; it is about the government pandering to a group that has the government's ear and has a lot of strength. The government will listen to that group rather than listen to rural and regional Queenslanders.

There is no reason to ban duck and quail hunting in Queensland. It is managed under the Nature Conservation (Duck and Quail) Conservation Plan 1995. Wayne Goss was in power when that legislation was introduced. I think he could see the reasons to continue with duck and quail hunting. He was a lot smarter than this government is today. Prior to 1995, hunting of duck and quail in Queensland was regulated under the Nature Conservation Act. It was a good move by the Goss government to introduce this conservation plan in 1995. Hunting duck in Queensland was strictly regulated to ensure that hunting was ecologically sustainable. Hunting has been confined to defined seasons, and hunting seasons are closely monitored. Hunters have to obtain a recreational wildlife harvesting licence. Hunting is only allowed on private property during a declared harvest period. Hunters also have to obtain permission from the relevant landholders before getting a licence.

Mrs Sullivan: You're giving the minister a lot of ammunition.

Mr KNUTH: If someone is applying for a licence for the first time, they need to pass a waterfowl or quail identification test. It is strictly monitored. Duck and quail shooters are aware of their responsibility to observe the laws and regulations that relate to hunting. It is a fact that hunting is not the greatest threat for the birds; the greatest threat for the birds is the loss and degradation of their habitats.

What does the government want people in rural and regional Queensland to do? As I said before, we do not have multimillion-dollar sports stadiums, big screens, and trains and buses running on frequent schedules. But we have pig hunting, and we may be able to catch a fish or shoot a duck. That is what we have out there. If the members opposite lived out there they would be doing the same thing because they would not know any different. Many rural and regional Queenslanders rely on recreational activities such as fishing, shooting and camping. But slowly this government is destroying their heritage, lifestyle and way of life.