



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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MOTION: DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (8.06 pm): I rise to speak to this disallowance motion, which was moved by the member for Gregory. It is disappointing that these laws have been introduced in Queensland. They are a recipe for disaster. If they are not rescinded, they will cost jobs. They will also increase the risk of accidents because inexperienced drivers will be employed to replace those experienced drivers who will exit the industry because they have had a gutful, or it is no longer viable for them to continue, or they have lost their licences because of loss of demerit points.

These new laws do not cover driving errors but paperwork infringements. If a driver is issued with a logbook infringement and is penalised with demerit points and a fine, the demerit points are not just deducted from the driver's truck licence but also from the driver's car licence. Therefore, it is possible for those drivers to lose their entire licence when their only crime was to not complete their logbooks correctly. Regardless of whether or not these people are competent drivers, their inability to complete their paperwork adequately puts them in the same category as those people who drive dangerously, thereby putting other road users at risk.

The average age of the Australian truck driver is the mid-50s. Already the trucking industry is suffering from a shortage of experienced drivers. Currently, several livestock transport firms have stood down road train units because of the shortage of experienced drivers. The welfare of the stock and the disastrous conditions of some of our rural roads requires drivers with experience in this industry. However, these unfair rules will result in the trucking industry not being able to attract drivers to the industry. Who wants to lose their licence, risk their livelihood or face the possibility of having to seek alternative employment because of logbook infringements? This is an extreme punishment for a law-abiding citizen.

Commercial pilots can lose their commercial pilot's licence but not lose their ability to fly. Those pilots can retain their private pilot's licence so that they can gain employment in the private sector. Why should truck drivers lose their car licence for misdemeanours that do not reflect on their ability to drive? A comparison could be made between this regulation and the legislation that was introduced to regulate the helicopter industry. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority recognised the particular difficulties faced by pilots involved in the helicopter-mustering industry and proposed amendments to reflect its understanding of the industry-specific issues. This motion provides this government with an opportunity to recognise the specific difficulties that are faced by livestock transporters.

This legislation demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of cattle transportation. It does not take into consideration the particular challenges specific to the cattle industry. The animal welfare issues and the road conditions that these drivers have to endure to safely cart cattle from one destination to another are being ignored by this legislation.

Livestock transporters plan their trips with the best intentions of completing the journey within the time frame guidelines. However, with animal welfare, weather, shocking road conditions and mechanical issues, there are going to be times when the trip will be delayed. It is not possible to pull up at a suitable rest area for five hours with a truck loaded with cattle. How many rest areas has this state government put in place with shade that can be utilised to protect their cargo? There are few spelling facilities that are

suitable for livestock transporters. It was the Goss government that pulled up all the trucking yards. There are not many trucking facilities here in Queensland—certainly not enough trucking facilities.

On the Flinders Highway between Townsville and Mount Isa there are only two government funded rest stops. The one at Marathon on the eastern side of Richmond is not big enough to cater for triples. The rest stop at Maxwellton on the western side of Richmond is the only suitable government provided resting facility for triples along that highway. Is the government going to spend millions on upgrading and creating more rest areas throughout the state to cater for these new logbook infringement laws? Will this government subsidise the trucking industry to ensure that it remains viable?

With the livestock industry there will be serious animal welfare issues that drivers, unless they are willing to break the law, will not be able to address. Animal welfare will be seriously jeopardised unless these laws are thrown out. I have been informed that at this present moment at Harvey's Range and Forty Mile Scrub the transport department are out there harassing truckies, checking their logbooks, booking them and making their lives a misery.

Ms Croft: That's rubbish.

Mr KNUTH: This law will create an unsafe environment on our roads through the exodus of skilled drivers. It will increase freight costs that will flow on to the consumer, create animal welfare issues, cost jobs and has the potential to ruin an industry. You are concerned about animal welfare issues, aren't you? You care for animal welfare.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Charters Towers, would you please direct your speech through the chair.

Mr KNUTH: I support the opposition's motion to have the logbook and the demerit point rules disallowed.