



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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CHARTERS TOWERS, MINING COMMUNITIES LAND RENTAL INCREASES; CHARTERS TOWERS AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (10.13 pm): I want to raise a serious issue in relation to a massive residential leasehold land rent increase in the mining communities of Moranbah, Collinsville and Dysart. This increase is one of the biggest rip-offs ever to hit average working families in Queensland's history. Moranbah residents have seen their residential leasehold land rent jump from \$870 in 2006 to \$3,400 in 2007. This is on top of a homeowner's \$1,800 rates bill and home loan and equates to paying an extra \$65 a week out of their pockets. Collinsville land rental values have also risen from \$75 in 2006 to \$930 in 2007—a 1,200 per cent increase.

Minister Craig Wallace's defence of the increase in parliament was horrifying, suggesting that the people of Collinsville have only gone from paying \$18 a week for a quarter-acre block. Sarcastically he added, 'Tell me someone in this House who would not mind paying \$18 a week rent for a quarter-acre block?' I challenge the minister to get out of his subterranean existence and venture out and visit local Moranbah residents, and he will find that these people are paying the state government an extra \$65 a week on top of their home loans and \$1,800 a year in rates. Who can afford this after paying the rates, the mortgage, fuel, school expenses and the high cost of living and then hand \$65 a week over to the Treasury coffers?

What is hypocritical is that the Beattie government has continued to warn local councils not to cash in on land valuation increases, yet it has slammed local working families with a whopping increase of up to \$3,400 a year. This is highway robbery and it is hard to comprehend how the state government can justify this greedy hike. The region contributes billions of dollars to the state's economy and the best the government can do to reward residents is slam them with a \$3,400 residential leasehold bill. This hike does not affect the big transnational corporations. Rather, it hits the battler—apprentices, supermarket workers, teachers, nurses, miners and families who service the area.

I call on the Beattie government to adopt the opposition's position where leasehold land rent increases are pegged to CPI or cap the rate similar to rural leasehold land. The minister also needs to look at providing leasehold landholders the opportunity to convert to freehold at 2003 pricing. This will ensure that families are not slugged with a massive increase through the mining boom and not be disadvantaged during a downturn in the industry.

On Saturday at 12.30 pm a Charters Towers man badly injured his leg in a machinery accident. Because of fatigue and a lack of staff as a result of an unwanted roster system, just one paramedic turned up. Because the paramedic was alone, they called the auxiliary fire and rescue service before the paramedic was able to assist the accident victim. The Townsville rescue helicopter was called but was busy, so the Mackay rescue service delivered the man to Townsville Hospital at 4.35 pm.

The Beattie government must listen to the paramedics and throw the roster system out; otherwise the Ambulance Service will end up a greater catastrophe than the health crisis. It will get to the point where the Fire and Rescue Service will be delivering babies in the back of fire trucks. The government's spin doctors must recognise that no matter how much spiel and spin they use to cover things up the fact is that

families are being traumatised by a now malfunctioned Ambulance Service. Ambulance officers and paramedics are leaving in droves. The new roster system has dismally failed since the Beattie government introduced it in 2002 and has caused a mass exodus, low morale, high fatigue levels and longer response times. Our local ambulance officers do a wonderful job—

Time expired.