



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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CAPE YORK PENINSULA HERITAGE BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (3.40 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Bill. I believe that this bill is designed to amend parts of the Wild Rivers Act. That act is a flop. It does not have the support of communities on Cape York Peninsula. It does not have the support of those in the grazing and pastoral industries on Cape York Peninsula. Likewise it does not have the support of the Aboriginal community. It was an attempt by the conservation movement to push their agenda.

I believe they feel that all land should belong to the state. This was an attempt to take from pastoralists their most valuable resource—their river system. In the end, it has come back to bite them. It has affected sustainable development for Indigenous communities in those areas. I hope this bill will address this issue. I wholeheartedly support the Aboriginal people in the Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York Peninsula in their endeavours to create jobs, have sustainable development and sustainable aquacultural and agricultural industries.

In those cape communities—the member for Cook knows about this—there is not a lot to do. I am not so sure about Thursday Island or the other islands of the cape. In those Indigenous communities they have the opportunity to participate in traditional hunting. They can go out and catch a minerva meat catfish. Some of them spear crocs. They have very little to do. They do not have cinemas or multimillion-dollar shopping complexes. They do not have trains running frequently or Indy. They have their area which they use for traditional purposes. They need areas to expand and develop. They need to have areas where they can work and have jobs. Hopefully, this bill will provide that framework.

This bill provides a framework for the joint management of Cape York national parks. The explanatory notes state that national parks and other claimable land in the Cape York Peninsula region are taken to be transferable land for the purpose of this act. It clarifies that Indigenous management agreements must be entered into prior to being dedicated as a national park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land). It must ensure that the existing lease, agreement, permit or authority that has been issued over a national park at the time of its transfer to a national park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land) continues under the existing conditions despite any other act.

I am not sure about the word 'transfer' and about national parks being transferred to Aboriginal land. I do not know where they are coming from. National parks are there for the benefit of all Queenslanders. There are places in national parks where people can get a permit from the parks and wildlife people to fish and camp in that national park. Many north Queenslanders and Queenslanders travel hundreds of kilometres if not thousands of kilometres to go and fish in those national parks. This is a very important issue. We want to know whether we are going to have the right to fish in those national parks that could be transferred to Aboriginal land. This is an issue that cost the Goss government. He tried to ban fishing in national parks. He copped the wrath of over a million fishermen across the state who were absolutely rotable. I hope the minister will address that—that when it comes to transferring national parks to Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 we will still be able to get a permit to fish in those areas.

I believe that the national parks do need to be managed. They are a breeding ground for feral animals and noxious weeds. There are a number of national parks that I have been to before I became a member and since I have been a member. The Staaten River National Park is a haven and breeding ground for feral animals and noxious weeds. It is an absolute disgrace. It needs to be properly managed.

Wild pigs are running riot at Alice River. I have been told that the Aboriginals in Kowanyama like to burn off. I believe that they have kept that cleaner than other national parks throughout the state because they have burned off in the area over centuries. The Alice River National Park is the cleanest national park I have ever been to. When driving into the Alice River National Park the feral animals—especially the feral pigs and wild cats—are running riot. No-one shoots them. They do not run from vehicles. They know that they are protected. We need to open up those areas so that hunters can go in with a permit and shoot the feral pigs. That is not much to ask.

Mr Reeves: Are you saying that the pigs know that they are being protected?

Mr KNUTH: The member should go up there and he will know what I mean. Cars drive past them and they know that they cannot be touched and they will be looked after.

Mr Reeves: You are saying that the pigs know that they are being protected.

Mr KNUTH: Yes, they know. They are just like cows. The member needs to get out in the bush to gain a bit of an understanding. If a person drives past a cow day in and day out the cow knows that they will not harm it. If we were to drive past pigs and shoot at them they would run. These pigs do not run because they do not care because they know the people who are driving past could not give a damn.

Mr Mickel: If the pigs were that smart, you'd put them into parliament!

Mr KNUTH: They are that smart. They are very smart. The Aboriginal community knows this too. The pigs are not particularly bothered to run. If people shoot at them they will run. It is guaranteed that they will run.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Palaszczuk): Perhaps the member could come back to the bill.

Mr KNUTH: This bill relates to crocodiles, but I dispute what the member for Hervey Bay said this morning about living with flying foxes. I challenge him to come to Charters Towers.

Ms Male: You are not talking about flying foxes again?

Mr KNUTH: We have had them flapping around for six years and living and roosting above our homes. They carry a lethal virus. The member should come and live with 6,000 death adders above her home and see whether we need to live with flying foxes.

In relation to crocodiles, there are a lot of crocodiles in the gulf. We have been fishing up there. Their numbers are out of proportion and it is a catastrophe. One grazier in the gulf said that once he could go down to Einasleigh River and catch a barramundi. He cannot do that now because all the crocs have eaten the barra and the only thing in that river is crocs. This issue needs to be investigated. Aboriginal people in that area are looking for jobs. We know that crocodile numbers are out of control. So why don't we provide a bounty for Aboriginals to hunt crocodiles so that they could make a living from it? This would be a good idea to reduce croc numbers.

Mr Mickel: So you'd shoot them too?

Mr KNUTH: Yes. There are lots of crocodiles in that area. I have to tell the House about the time I was fishing in the gulf and there was a freshwater crocodile measuring about 10 feet underneath the boat. I had a lure which I had already caught four barramundi on. It was the only good lure that I had—it was the only lure with which I could catch a barra—and I was fishing in a place in Cape York Peninsula that is prolific with crocodiles. I caught a catfish and that crocodile actually latched on to my catfish. I had to fight that crocodile for about three minutes, and I could not let it go because if I did let it go or cut the line I would have lost my \$20 Nils Master lure. When I brought that crocodile to the surface—this is a true story—he would not let go, so I actually bashed it across the head with the oar. There are too many crocodiles in that region and something needs to be done about it. I just wanted to add that small contribution to this debate.