



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—LNP) (2.44 pm): The Penalties and Sentences and Other Acts Amendment Bill is another ploy by this government to raise revenue. I have concerns not only with the extremely poor timing of this announcement but also with the complete lack of consultation that has been undertaken to determine whether this is an effective way to deter illegal activity. What research suggests that increased fines are effective in deterring people from doing the wrong thing?

This decision will be seen by the Queensland public for what it is—a desperate measure by the state government to revenue raise to get itself out of a financial crisis of its own making. The government has failed to invest in the high-voltage network which has resulted in the energy crisis. It has failed to invest in water infrastructure from the beginning which resulted in the very depressing scenario where the government wanted to force Queenslanders to drink sewerage water. It has failed to invest adequately and manage our health system which is buckling under the pressure of an increasing and ageing population. This is due to gross mismanagement.

This government is becoming overly reliant on the increased taxes paid by everyday Queenslanders also affected by the global financial crisis. This year alone the government has increased the royalties paid by the mining industry and increased car and boat registrations for all Queenslanders. State taxes have now more than doubled in 10 years.

To claim that the unit price for penalty units has not increased since 1998 is just nonsense. In 2005 the maximum penalty unit for disciplinary action under the Professional Engineers Act 2002 was increased by 40 penalty units to a maximum of 200 penalty units. In 2004 the maximum penalty for wilfully threatening or causing damage or harm to marine parks without authority was increased from a maximum of 100 penalty units to 3,000 penalty units. In 2007 the offence of unlawfully directing a learner motorcycle rider on the road under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Driver Licensing) Regulation 1999 was increased from 20 penalty units to 60 penalty units.

Likewise, in 2004 the offence of pitch invasion under the Major Sports Facilities Act was increased from 20 penalty units to 40 penalty units. In 2003 the penalty for exceeding the speed limit under section 20 of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Road Rules) Regulation was raised from 20 penalty units to a maximum of 40 penalty units.

Every man, woman and child in this state is concerned about the climbing road toll which can be attributed to the fatal five—fatigue, not wearing a seatbelt, drink driving, speeding and the dreadful state of Queensland's roads. But a 30 per cent increase in fines is seen for what it is. It is to raise funds to cover the government's debt.

The fine for disturbing a colony of flying foxes is \$75,000. That is absolutely unbelievable. When Premier Beattie had the opportunity to have these flying foxes removed he did nothing. The residents of Charters Towers, who have put up with these flying foxes flapping around for seven years, were hoping the Bligh government would do something about them. What did they get? They cop a \$75,000 fine if they disturb flying foxes. How on earth are they going to get rid of the flying foxes if people are going to cop a \$75,000 fine?

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr KNUTH: A \$100,000 fine. It is very encouraging, isn't it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Charters Towers, direct your comments through the chair.

Mr KNUTH: We now have police doing the work of the transport department officers. They are issuing fines for traffic infringements when there are increasing levels of juvenile crime and unsolved felonies. Law-abiding citizens and the police themselves are tired of the slap-on-the-wrist approach being taken.

We keep hearing how this government is taking a strong stance on traffic offences. It is time this government took a strong stance on juvenile crime. It is of paramount importance that our police are able to target the real criminals, that they are given the opportunity to arrest them, not the person who forgets to lock their car or has not wound up their car windows. To reduce traffic accidents and fatalities the government must invest in our shocking roads and in our rail transport to transport passengers, livestock and freight across the state. This would reduce the number of road trains, buses and cars on our road network. I bring those issues to the attention of the House.