



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS**

Hansard Tuesday, 2 December 2008

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## **CHARTERS TOWERS REGIONAL COUNCIL, LICENCE FEES**

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—LNP) (9.39 pm): I would like to bring to the attention of the House serious concerns about the increases to the environmentally related activity fees which would see the state government triple the cost of license fees pertaining to environmental related activities. The Charters Towers Regional Council is set to see the ERA fees rise from \$16,130 to \$50,800 at the beginning of the year 2009. These increased fees are on sewage treatment plants, waste disposal and waste treatment plants and other environmental activities. All this is adding another big kick in the guts to the local councils and ratepayers, especially during the worst possible time after forced amalgamation and global financial turmoil. I am led to believe that these fees are expected to hit every council right across-the-board throughout Queensland.

Areas of the Charters Towers Regional Council that will be hit by the state government are: screening extraction—gravel pit—will go up from \$2,960 to \$4,400, Greenvale sewerage will go from \$1,500 to \$10,600, Charters Towers sewage treatment plant will go from \$3,960 to \$17,800 and the Stublely Street waste disposal main dump will go from \$1,500 to \$8,200. I have been informed that these cost are nonnegotiable.

I am also led to believe that these fees have come about as a result of a report revolving around climate change and greenhouse gas emissions and that the EPA has come up with a fee structure under the EPA's environmental emissions profile report. Basically it categorises how much entities are emitting and how much they need to pay. I cannot understand why councils and local businesses are to be hit with these increased charges as they are already adhering to very good environmental practices. All systems are working very well.

The state government is also pressuring councils to increase fees on our local businesses. This is another case of the government hurting the goose that lays the golden egg. It will result in fee increases, some of which will exceed 500 per cent. The affected businesses will have little option but to increase the costs to their customers even though they have limited ability to do this. This money grab by the government will only add to their woes and prevent new investment in industry. This is one of the greatest hikes in Queensland history faced by local governments and ratepayers, especially when they have been hit with higher rates through forced amalgamation, and rural and regional communities are still suffering from the massive blow that this has caused.

It is more important to protect the environment than to put massive increases on license fees revolving around those activities. Ripping off councils, small business and ratepayers does not result in a cleaner environment. This is evidence of a state government that is clutching at straws and is desperate to find funds to cover its increasing \$65 billion deficit, which is costing \$6 million a day in interest. I call on the minister to thoroughly investigate these massive hikes and acknowledge the ramifications that these massive hikes will have for our local ratepayers.

Time expired.