



Speech by  
**Jeff Seeneey**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

Hansard Wednesday, 2 September 2009

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**MOTION: HENDRA VIRUS**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (6.21 pm): I rise to support the motion that has been moved by the opposition tonight and to express my disgust and dismay at the response the government has provided in this parliament to every Queenslander. The proposition that has been put by the opposition is calling on the government to take some action about a public health issue that has cost the lives of four Queenslanders—a public health issue that has cost the lives of four Queenslanders—and a wildlife management issue that has cost the Queensland horticultural and fruit-growing industry millions and millions of dollars. It is a serious issue.

A public health issue that has cost the lives of four Queenslanders on its own should warrant immediate and decisive action on the part of the government. But tonight in this parliament we have heard a response from the government which dismays me and which should disturb every Queenslander. The absurdity of that response was culminated by the address that was given by the member for Keppel. The address that was given by the member for Keppel should be instructive to every Queenslander about the attitude of this government to issues such as this.

Nobody is suggesting that the solution to this issue is to seek the eradication of the flying fox. What is being suggested by members on this side of the House who have had to deal with this issue in their electorates is that the government recognise and immediately move to implement the mitigation permits that can be part of a management plan and for relocation techniques that have been used successfully in other areas to become available to Queenslanders who are trying to manage this issue so that flying fox colonies can be moved away from areas of population, so that fruit growers can use mitigation permits as one element in a strategy to protect their livelihoods and so that communities can use both mitigation permits and relocation techniques to ensure that we lower the risk of more Queenslanders losing their lives to what has become an emerging public health issue.

In response to that reasonable and sensible call on the government that has been made by the opposition tonight, we have an amendment put before the House which is absurd in the extreme. It begins by noting the tragic death of the latest Queenslanders to die of the Hendra virus. Of course we all extend our condolences and our sympathy to his family. But those condolences and sympathies are empty and meaningless unless this government is prepared to take some action—action that is clearly available to it. So it is that the expressions of condolences and sympathies that we have heard from the members of the government tonight have to be seen as meaningless and empty because they are not prepared to do anything more than stand up and move this mealy-mouthed amendment that we see before the House. They are not prepared to take the reasonable and sensible action that is available to them to reduce the risk of more Queenslanders becoming victims of this public health issue.

The amendment that the government has moved is in five parts. Of course the opposition is sympathetic and we extend our condolences to the families of the Queenslanders who have died. But we will not support the remaining parts of the amendment that the government has put forward. It is all about educating the community, investigating non-lethal mitigations and ongoing efforts to better understand. It is all about, as the minister said in his contribution, workshops and guidelines. It is all mealy-mouthed

nonsense. It is about the government avoiding the responsibility that it has to address a public health issue in a way that will protect Queenslanders.

That is what the motion before the House is tonight and every member of this parliament should be forthright in their support for it, because every member of this House should recognise the need to take decisive action, reasonable action, to ensure that the people we represent are protected when those protections are available. It is not about eradicating a wildlife species; it is about protecting the lives of Queenslanders and it is about protecting the incomes and the livelihoods of Queenslanders. This government and every member of this government should be condemned for not supporting the motion that has been put forward by the member for Caloundra tonight.