



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

Hansard Wednesday, 18 August 2010

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## **GEOHERMAL ENERGY BILL**

**Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (3.10 pm): The regulations proposed in the Geothermal Energy Bill 2010 and accompanying amendments to the Mineral Resources Act 1989, the Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2009, the Petroleum Act 1923 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 are a long overdue recognition of the need for a more collaborative approach to mining exploration in this state. This is a rare step by this government towards correcting the understandable concerns amongst landowners that the tenure of land that they have toiled over the generations could be at any moment superseded by a tenure to an exploration company for the resources beneath their crops and pastures.

The member for Callide was right when he said that landowners should never be the victims in the necessary but often times complicated issue of land rights. The bill goes further, ensuring stronger negotiation positions for landowners when dealing with resource exploration companies. However, as stated by the member for Callide, there needs to be a greater effort by this government to make landowners aware of the implications of this legislation, their rights as well as their responsibilities.

Only a month ago, carcinogenic chemicals found by a company monitoring bore samples caused the shutdown of local bores within a two-kilometre radius of an exploration site in the Kingaroy basin. While the restrictions imposed by DERM have been lifted, this highlights the permanent impact that exploration can have on the surrounding area, not only the area for which the resource company has tenure.

The coal seam gas industry is a relatively new and untested industry in Australia. I welcome more stringent regulations which entitle landowners to have their say in the methods that resource companies use on their land for exploration. The perception of the mining sectors as the schoolyard bully with legislative protection has contributed to much unnecessary tension between primary industry and the resource industry. This government's failure to recognise the importance of protecting the agricultural assets that built this state before the shift in our economy to the energy industry has not alleviated this perception.

The case in the Kingaroy basin brings to bear an even more critical aspect of this legislation—that is, the need for cooperation where landowners feel and believe that mining companies are not a burden but at times an asset. The greatest asset that we have is security of tenure and that is what has made this country great. To undermine that security through vegetation management, spy in the sky satellites, dob in a farmer hotlines and excuses to ride roughshod over land tenure all in the name of mineral wealth or protecting our environment severely contradicts our democracy and the Australian way of life. The need for legislation which recognises the supremacy of principal tenure is fundamental in upholding the authority of land tenure legislation.

The proposed legislation does not affirm but goes further towards assuring property owners are to have a say regarding operations and mineral development on the properties for which they hold tenure. Landowners deserve legislation that recognises and respects their contribution to the Queensland economy. Cooperative relationships between parties involved in tenure negotiation should see less delay in exploration and development by the mining sector.

It is important for landowners to receive appropriate compensation if they have developed their land for generations and, all of a sudden, the situation changes—whether it is a road going through their property or some development in their region. It is important that just compensation is received for all of the costs that they have put into their land. That is why the LNP has a policy of a charter of property rights. We want to ensure that anyone who is affected in any way when it comes to their land being resumed is appropriately compensated. I commend the minister for this legislation because I believe it goes a long way towards fixing issues which have been around since I was elected in 2004, like vegetation management, reef protection, dob in a farmer hotlines—the whole lot. I commend the minister for showing an element of goodwill towards that.

This is important legislation. Two or three years ago, there was a mine spill at Mount Leyshon mines and there is still leakage and there always has been leakage. That spill went into Clarke Creek, the Puddler, the Two Mile, the Broughton and then into the Burdekin River. It contaminated that water. There were a number of dead birds and the people in the town were ropeable, but the sad fact is that it took 20 days before the EPA came out and looked at that contamination.

I commend the EPA for what it is doing now at the Mount Leyshon site in working with the company, but at that time it was unbelievable that it took the EPA 20 days to even look at it, when only two weeks before a household that had 5,000 bats above its home was visited by an EPA boss from Brisbane who knocked on their door and threatened them on the grounds that they were disturbing the flying foxes. I hope we never see anything like that, but I commend the EPA for its work with Newmont over the Mount Leyshon mine spill. There is still an issue in relation to the landowners in that area. Some of them have not been able to sell cattle for over two years, and that is why it is very important that we ensure we have protection for our landowners.

Queensland's primary industries provide more than \$13 billion to the Australian economy and they were recognised as being a main driver through the global economic crisis. It should also be acknowledged that the mining and petroleum industry contributes \$26.76 billion to the Australian economy. That is why it is unbelievable that the present Prime Minister and the previous Prime Minister proposed the super tax. These industries were the main drivers through the global economic crisis, but they are being punished by the government in this act of stupidity. I know of a helicopter pilot who sold his helicopter because he lost three mining projects due to the fact that there is no confidence in the mining industry as a result of this proposed super tax. In regard to this legislation, we hope that this is a step in the right direction to ensuring successful exploration tenure negotiations that will see our mining and energy industry continue to grow through cooperation and due respect to our agricultural sector.