



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Wednesday, 1 September 2010

MOTION: SALE OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (6.07 pm): We have an \$85 billion deficit and we have lost our AAA credit rating. The Labor government is clutching at straws and will even blame the Tories for the catastrophe. However, Labor has been in power for 18 of the past 20 years. When Goss first came to power in 1989, he could not believe what he inherited—all the assets such as power stations, dams, water infrastructure and cranes moving equipment. Then he embraced what they called the no new dams policy. That no new dams policy stopped the Wolfdene Dam, which would have provided one million megalitres of water to the south-east corner, which would have almost set it up for life. Beattie embraced the no new dams policy, but suddenly there was a water crisis in the south-east corner. Therefore, going into the 2006 election, Peter Beattie had to appear to be doing something about water because he had built nothing. He had to set that perception. He flew over Traveston and said, 'I will build my dam here.' Now we have a \$9 billion deficit with the failed water grid and the failed Traveston dam, which would not have provided any water anyway. We had the energy crisis, then the water crisis and now we have an \$85 billion deficit and they are selling our profitable assets.

This sell-off is probably one of the greatest acts of betrayal by the Labor Party in Queensland history. I had the privilege to work for Queensland Rail for 20 years. When I first joined, a job in the railway was a job for life. We had a rail network that had a station at every town, a trucking yard every 30 kilometres and a freight service that reduced the traffic on our roads. Our small communities thrived on the back of the railways and relied upon a reliable freight service. Queensland Rail would boast about having up to 26,000 employees, and many workers were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders. This was Queensland Rail before the 19 years of Labor government under Goss, Beattie and now the public asset seller, the Bligh government. I have an extract from the *History of Maryborough Station* which I will read out in parliament. It states—

Besides the convenience of safer and more efficient travel, the railways also provided alternative employment to mining for young men. The railway men also formed a supportive group of workers for ALP which represented Maryborough in state parliament over a long period of time.

The same support to the ALP also came from the iconic workshops at Ipswich, Townsville, Banyo, Rockhampton and many other rail facilities across the state. I have spoken with rail employees who are angry, fear for their jobs and cannot believe that the Labor government has betrayed its core principles and grassroots. We never thought we would see the day when this 144-year-old Queensland icon, built by the taxpayers of Queensland through sweat and toil, would be sold. Our Citytrain and passenger service runs at a loss of \$1 billion each year and relies on the coal network to prop it up. The sale of Queensland's profitable assets will mean that the state will have little income stream for our future generations to draw from.

At the last election the LNP were open with the Queensland voters. However, the Bligh government lied and, to make matters worse—

Mr SPEAKER: You will withdraw that. It is unparliamentary.

Mr KNUTH: I apologise, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Withdraw it, please. I said withdraw it.

Mr KNUTH: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The Bligh government is selling Queensland's profitable assets. I was hoping that after the caucus meeting on Monday the Premier would come out and announce that she has listened to the Labor backbench and Queenslanders and will not be selling these assets. I was hoping that would happen, because the rest of Queensland and I do not want to see our assets sold, particularly Queensland Rail.

The state swing was real, but it will be worse at the next election. Gone at the next election will be the seats of Brisbane Central, Mount Isa, Redcliffe, Mount Coot-tha, Pumicestone, Burleigh, Mount Ommaney, Kallangur, Pine Rivers, Ferny Grove, Mansfield, Cairns, Springwood, Townsville, Southport, Whitsunday, Toowoomba North, Barron River, Cook, Broadwater, Everton and Chatsworth. It is understandable to lose your career for standing up for your principles, but you will lose your careers for standing up for everything you do not believe in. Go back to your fundamental principles. Go back to your grassroots. Go and listen to the workers, the railway employees and the people of Queensland and support the LNP on its position to oppose these asset sales.