



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Wednesday, 15 September 2010

CHARTERS TOWERS, BAT COLONY

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (10.43 pm): This morning I tabled a petition of 2,061 signatures from Charters Towers residents outraged at this government's refusal to remove bats using a helicopter on the grounds that it was concerned that the bats may be harmed when mustering out to a suitable roosting site. This petition was initiated by council workers who are forced to wear space like safety equipment to protect themselves from serious health risks and lethal viruses such as Hendra virus and lyssavirus while working in Lissner Park.

The petition says it all and draws attention to the danger to health, the noise and the smell emanating from the bat colony right in the heart of Charters Towers and points out the excreta that covers the grounds surrounding homes, picnic tables, playground equipment preventing the park from being used. Our town swimming pool is adjacent to the park and has had thousands of bats flying over it twice daily—day in, day out—for the past nine years.

There have now been 12 incidents of Hendra virus since 1994 involving 42 horses. There have been seven confirmed human infections, all in Queensland, with four people dying including 34-year-old vet Ben Cuneen. I say to the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability and the health minister: we want the bats gone and the problem solved once and for all, most importantly for the health and safety of Charters Towers residents.

As the Premier has requested her MPs to walk in the shoes of ordinary Queenslanders, will the minister accept the community's invitation and carry out work experience with council workers in Lissner Park to gain real experience so that the minister will be better positioned to make future decisions on the removal of bats from our community? The time has come for the government to stop being sympathetic to flying foxes and place the quality of life of residents before vermin.

I also table 201 signatures of concerned landowners who attended a meeting on Wednesday, 8 September in Charters Towers and resolved to request an extension from the environment minister and to petition parliament to have the process dropped. I was disappointed that the environment minister would not be offering a blanket extension to landholders. Landholders are struggling with the complexity of the paperwork and onerous conditions of the ERMPs. They have been given little notice and virtually no chance to have a say about the 64-page ERMP document packs demanding information about farming practices and a signed declaration under threat of huge fines and jail terms.

Tabled paper: Copy of a list of signatories [2978].

The policy is totally unfair, unworkable and it was politically driven to win Greens preferences and does not include any requirement on towns and cities along the coast. The evidence from leading marine scientist Professor Peter Ridd of James Cook University clearly shows that sediment run-off from grazing and farming lands is not having any detrimental effect on the Great Barrier Reef. Professor Ridd told the meeting that the science used by the state government to justify their ERMP policy was absolute rubbish. Landholders have been unfairly singled out.

(Time expired)