



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Tuesday, 23 November 2010

FLYING FOX RALLY; QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT AGENT PROGRAM

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (10.42 pm): This Saturday at 9.30 am, Charters Towers residents will be rallying in droves to protest against Minister Kate Jones's refusal to allow the removal of flying foxes from parks and residential areas by helicopter—a non-lethal, effective method of removal—on the grounds that we could not guarantee that a bat was not going to be harmed during the removal process. Yet the minister still cannot guarantee that no person or horse will be harmed as a result of bats roosting amongst residential areas. The minister also still refuses to take up local council workers' offers to spend a day in their shoes to get a better understanding of what it is like every day to put up with the itches and the stench and to wear space-like safety clothing to help protect them from lethal viruses which have already resulted in seven deaths and 36 affected cases.

Local council workers also invited the Premier, the health minister and the climate change minister to the bat rally to hear their views and to explain to thousands of residents why we must be exposed to this filth. They have still not responded to their invitation to the rally, so I will read a letter of invitation written by council worker Mr Allan Henderson so that the Premier and the ministers are assured of this invitation and can respond to him. He states—

Premier Anna Bligh

For how much longer will the good people of Charters Towers have their lives ruined by thousands of flying foxes and fruit bats? How can a Bligh Government concerned for ordinary people and their quality of life expose people of the Towers to the stench, filth and disease caused by these intruders. The town and its citizens were there well before the bats arrived. The residents of Charters Towers and the Charters Towers Action Group, in conjunction with the Charters Towers Regional Council request yourself, Minister Kate Jones and the Minister for Health Paul Lucas to attend a street march on 27th November 2010 to discuss the removal of a colony of flying foxes from Lissner Park in Charters Towers.

Charters Towers residents have had a gutful of the Bligh Government's inaction on this issue. The street march will end up at Lissner Park where a public forum will be set up for yourself and ministers to answer questions from Charters Towers residents about this issue.

I hope they will attend.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to the planned downgrade of the Queensland Government Agent Program Service Centre in Malanda. The QGAP service was established to provide rural Queenslanders with equal access to a range of government services such as birth and marriage certificates and vehicle and livestock registration including NLIS. The downgrading of the QGAP services will cost the small town of Malanda at least six jobs in a vital service that is fundamentally important to the survival of many small businesses and farm operators. These centres are vital for the survival of rural and regional Queenslanders, whose capacity to operate their business is severely impacted by the tyranny of distance. The reduction of opening hours from five days a week to one day a week exposes this government's hypocrisy in promising to create 100,000 jobs and encourage people to live in rural and regional areas. This is a kick in the guts not only to those who live in rural and regional areas but also to the very people who saw the need for this vital support and established QGAP service centres.