




Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 9 March 2011

MOTION: DARLING DOWNS, EXPLORATION PERMITS

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.40 pm): I rise to speak to this motion and I second the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: You do not have to second it.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, I know, Mr Speaker, but I am happy to do it because it is that important. It is not just about mining but about agriculture and lifestyle, as the member for Callide just pointed out at the end of his contribution. We are seeking to rectify and remedy these unfair decisions made by the Bligh government that have caused great disquiet and upset in these affected communities. I saw it just last Sunday and Monday when I was in Toowoomba with my shadow cabinet. People were deeply concerned and angry that the government has granted this exploration permit for coal in this area between Gowrie Junction and Kingsthorpe.

If successful, this joint venture between Australia Pacific Coal and Blackwood Coal could see an open-cut coalmine in operation on the outskirts of Toowoomba just minutes away from Highfields. A couple of hundred people turned up to express their concerns to our shadow cabinet in Toowoomba and, as the member for Callide, the shadow minister, has just pointed out, they are genuine concerns felt by young people, by elderly people, by people who are very upset about the uncertainty that has been put upon them. I expect many more to turn up to protest at the government's community cabinet meeting in Toowoomba. When they do turn up, as I know they will, I encourage the government to give them a fair hearing and recognise the genuine concerns that these people hold for the future—for the future of their city, for the future of their families, for the future of their economic and financial security as well.

Mr Shine: You should come.

Mr LANGBROEK: I say to the member for Toowoomba North who is here that I hope he will be there standing with some of his constituents who are relatives of people in these areas and who are concerned. He needs to be there to respond to this community's justified anger. The people of Toowoomba have put their faith in the member for Toowoomba North for a number of years now, and it is time for him to stand up on behalf of his community and get this government to revoke this exploration permit at Gowrie. The government should admit that they were wrong and admit that this permit should never have been approved.

Most of the group that came to see us in Toowoomba were from the Toowoomba Coal Mine Action Group, a group of residents and families that was formed in response to this issue. They held a community meeting on 18 February at the Gowrie Junction community hall. More than 700 people attended this meeting—a clear indication of the depth of feeling in that community. These people have a right to be concerned. They have a right to be angry. I understand that the first time they learned of this exploration permit was through one of their local newspapers. That is unacceptable. They live in a beautiful community, a community that they are now worried could experience a similar fate to Acland, which has been deserted since a coalmine was developed there years ago.

They are worried about the increase of traffic on already bad roads, the impact on local tourism, and the pollution and dust that comes with this type of industry. As I was leaving Toowoomba and drove

through the streets of Toowoomba, I was surrounded by B-doubles and trucks that go through the city. As we have heard from the member for Toowoomba South many times over the last number of years, up to 500 trucks every day go through 16 sets of traffic lights. Elderly ladies are concerned about driving because they are surrounded by these huge hulking vehicles. Many of these trucks do not appear to be covering their loads, and that is leading to the dust pollution and pollution from coal affecting people in these communities.

I made a commitment to these people that an LNP government would rule out the approval of open-cut mining in environmentally sensitive, urban and prime agricultural areas. Under an LNP government, this type of exploration permit would never be granted. The *Toowoomba Chronicle* conducted a poll asking: is Gowrie Junction too close to Toowoomba for a coalmine? Eighty-nine per cent of people said yes. We in the LNP wholeheartedly agree with that. Toowoomba Regional Council's Mayor Peter Taylor has said his council is unanimously opposed to the mine and it should not go ahead in such a closely settled area. The area has been identified in council's planning for future growth. Water has already been laid on and sewerage is also planned in their budget. I quote Mayor Taylor, 'It is prime agricultural land, the best in the country, and it's too close to Toowoomba and Highfields.'

The LNP made a commitment in March 2009 that we would protect prime agricultural land from mining. We stand by this commitment. We recognise the long-term need to preserve prime farmland for continued agriculture. We welcome the government's recognition that prime agricultural land should be protected. However, we are still waiting for the detail. People want certainty, and I would encourage the government to release the mapping and identification of relevant areas to provide this certainty to landowners and the mining industry. We want the Mineral Resources Act to be enforced. We want to support and restore the peace of mind to good people whose lives have been affected by these government decisions.

(Time expired)