




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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KATTER'S AUSTRALIAN PARTY

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (11.51 am): It is a great honour to address this parliament as a representative of the new, powerfully emerging Katter's Australian Party. Before I was elected to parliament in February 2004, I committed to my electorate that I would passionately and sincerely represent my constituents—the workers, the ringers, the farmers, the bush battlers—and uphold the Australian way of life. However, given the stronghold that the two main political parties have over their members, I have found this to be almost impossible, as on many occasions members are forced to vote contrary to their conscience and the needs of their electorate. I believe that that is undemocratic and goes against the principles we were elected for.

It is refreshing that Queenslanders are positively embracing a new political force to break the iron grip and to hold these political parties to account. There are many good parliamentarians on both sides of the House, but they are hamstrung, bound and chained to party politics and the threat that if they do not vote along party lines their careers may be over. The Australian Party assures Queenslanders that their representative will take their views to parliament and that their members will vote according to their consciences and their electorate, rather than according to a political party or factional ideology, thus truly representing the people.

For example, the assets that were sold were generating an income for the benefit of Queensland, yet members of parliament were forced to vote along party lines, going against the fundamental principles of what they believe in. As we saw with the privatisation of the retail arm of the energy sector, which both major parties backed aggressively, Queensland has been hit with massive increases in electricity costs. The further sale of assets, particularly in the energy sector and SunWater, will add to the massive increases to our electricity and water costs and add further costs to rural areas. The Australian Party is the only party committed to not selling our profitable assets, as we believe that the government should provide essential services such as airports, water, electricity, gas, health services, road networks, public transport and communications—not profit-making transnational companies at the expense of consumers.

A massive expansion taking place in relation to coal seam gas will see more than 44,000 gas wells embedded over our Great Artesian Basin and prime agricultural land. Every passionate lobby group is crying out and pleading for a moratorium to whoa it up, to slow it down and to ensure we get the facts right. We have to ensure that our Great Artesian Basin is protected, we have to ensure that our farmers' rights are not trampled on and we have to ensure the future of a \$14 billion agricultural industry that is already battling against overseas imports and insecure land tenure.

The only groups opposing the moratorium are the two major political parties. Both major parties will put their hands on their hearts and talk about policies to protect the man on the land. They both claim to be a party for the bush and that they will ensure the DPI is returned as a stand-alone department. However, the reality is that, if they cannot protect the farmers from the rapid pace of coal seam gas expansion, that is all words and promises. It is just rhetoric and con. The Australian Party will implement immediately a 12-month moratorium on all proposed new coal seam gas projects. We will ensure the viability and the

sustainability of Queensland's food-producing regions by protecting them and we will uphold landowners' rights—full stop.

Just to set the record straight, a newspaper article indicated that one reason I left the LNP was discontent with LNP president Bruce McIver. That is not the case. I do not know where that came from or how it was misquoted. Over the years of Bruce being president, I have always had full respect for him. My reason for leaving has been clearly articulated. In addition, I was elected as a National member of parliament, not a Liberal member of parliament.

We all acknowledge the value that mining contributes to the economy and the wealth and growth it creates. However, there must be a balance to ensure mining communities are sustained and liveable. I am opposed to 100 per cent fly-in fly-out as it separates families and does not provide choice, social interaction or community participation. For example, the Moranbah region produces \$6 billion in gross revenue, yet it lacks accommodation infrastructure, appropriate health services and general services. The Australian Party will ensure a royalty-for-regions initiative whereby a minimum of 20 per cent of the mining royalties earned from the region must be returned to the region in the form of social and capital infrastructure, including the provision of affordable housing and associated services for miners and their families so they can enjoy the quality of life that communities have to offer. The Australian Party will protect Australian jobs, ensure freehold land is yours and not the government's, not support asset sales, return community participation to local hospitals and ensure the Australian way of life is not eroded.

(Time expired)