




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2014

LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (9.00 pm): In speaking to the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, it is great that we have the opportunity in this House to debate the grant of freehold land, especially from leasehold. There have been many issues since I was elected in 2004 such as the Vegetation Management Act and a lot of legislation has been passed by the House, including the ERMPs. That caused a lot of controversy to landholders because they believed that rights were being taken from them. Freehold landowners were of the view that, once they had purchased land at extra cost, it was theirs to manage and work as they saw fit. As legislation started coming through, we saw a lot of landowners paying massive prices for land. As time goes by there is always a concern that governments are interfering and using their legislative power to step in and make decisions on how you can manage that land.

Yes, we all acknowledge that there is the odd rogue landowner—and I could probably say one in 50—but to bring in legislation to take away the rights to manage the land from those landowners as a result of one landowner! It is very difficult to determine what defines a good landowner from a bad landowner. If you inherited 1,000 bullocks in the beginning and you did not have an issue with regard to bank loans and having to borrow money, you would probably be considered as a good landowner. But if you are a working-class person who has busted their guts to buy one property and then another, and you have worked your way up and you have got the banks breathing down your throat and you need to have 300 head of cattle grazing on that land to get a return, you can have governments looking upon you and saying that you are a bad landowner. Actually, you are a struggling landowner who is trying to make ends meet. Some are fortunate enough to have property that has been passed down through the generations, \$3 million to \$5 million in the bank, and it may seem that you do not have to overstock your property; whereas some have to try and make ends meet to ensure that the bank's interest rates are being paid.

It is so frustrating that we have seen this time and time again, and the Pederson family is an example. With all the best intentions they lost Niall station; likewise the banks foreclosed on Kangerong and it was not about the management whatsoever. It was not about the quality of their cattle, but it was the fact that live cattle exports were banned and they had no markets. Obviously it can be very difficult at times, especially when there are no markets. They had the cattle, but they had no markets to put them through to receive a return. When they did finally put their cattle through the markets, there was no return for them. So we cannot look at them and say that they were bad managers; it was just the times that they were going through.

Deep down I believe that one of the lowest acts we could ever have in this country is a government that turns against its own people because of what has been in the media. The ban on live exports has resulted in a loss of income. We have seen many people go bankrupt, and the market is still struggling as a result. I am sad and disappointed. Yes, we have all got to step up like working-class people and have a go. A lot of them have been done over by the mining companies. Likewise,

people on the land are trying to make a living on the farm and have to compete against foreign imports, but these situations that people find themselves in are not necessarily through any fault of their own. I have seen many farmers who try to be as efficient as they possibly can, but they have many forces against them.

I do acknowledge what the minister is trying to do here. I remember when the Goss government came to power, I think it was very difficult at the time. We had seen the prosperity of the Bjelke-Petersen government and Sir Joh was always pointing out the cranes moving equipment, the farmers ploughing the fields and the sugar pouring into the ships. When Wayne Goss came into power, he had the perception that we needed to clean away the cobwebs of the past and come out of the Dark Ages. Sir Joh was very passionate about the protection of land security, and from the beginning in the seventies he wanted to see land tenure convert from leasehold to freehold at an affordable price. Wayne Goss knew that he could not manage the economy the way that Sir Joh did. As an example, Sir Joh protected the mining towns. He went into the mining towns and he said to the companies, 'If you mine here, we will give the land and we will give you the railways, but you will bring the people into those towns.' That was very significant because that laid the foundations.

But regarding land tenure, I remember when I was at the Jericho races many people at the time indicated very strongly that Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen put this forward—just as the minister is now—to give the landowners the opportunity to convert leasehold land into freehold. Land tenure was very secure at that time, and landowners could not see any reason why they would want to convert leasehold into freehold and pay the extra costs. But land is not secure now. We have seen legislation that has been put before this House where landowners have tried to manage their land, and they have been hit by government tree police, water police, dob-in-the-farmer hotlines, spy-in-the-sky satellites, and it goes on from there.

A government member interjected.

Mr KNUTH: The member for silence! The only thing he does in parliament is interject, because he does not speak about anything. He does not represent his constituents; he just interjects. So the member for silence is speaking out.

I am not condemning anyone here at all, but the point that I am trying to make is that Wayne Goss did make a fortune. He made a lot of money. When he was elected he gave the opportunity to those who had mining homestead leases—and I do not have the figures. I wish I did. I do not have the resources like the LNP, who have \$30 million. I do not have it because you took it away from us. We do not have the resources to research that.

Wayne Goss made a lot of money out of giving people the opportunity to convert mining homestead leases into freehold, and this is exactly the same ploy that this minister is using in giving the opportunity to people to convert to freehold. There is a lot of money to be made by the state government in regards to converting from leasehold to freehold. With hindsight, the decision that Wayne Goss made was commendable because he gave opportunities to those who had leases right across the state and it has given the opportunity for the minister and the state government to make a lot of money in converting land from leasehold to freehold.