




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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ADJOURNMENT

Charters Towers Electorate, Emergency Services Labelling System

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (11.13 pm): Tonight I rise to speak about a matter that has been plaguing the people of my electorate for over a decade. This is an issue that has caused a great deal of confusion and anger amongst the residents of Charters Towers. The people of Charters Towers are unable to be located by emergency services due to a bureaucratic and confusing suburb labelling system. In the past residents were listed in the Telstra telephone directory under surname, initial and Charters Towers. Now the town, with a population of just over 8,000 people, has been split into multiple suburbs, each listed with different boundaries depending on which service or utility you speak to. It is like the suburb of Aspley being split into six separate suburbs. To give the House an example of the confusion facing Charters Towers, a constituent has told the local media that according to the council her home is in Macrossan, according to the electoral roll she lives in Dotswood, according to the emergency services she lives in Campaspe and according to Telstra she lives in Basalt. If you ring Telstra and ask for the phone number of a mate, they would not have a clue!

Since 2005 I have disputed these changes, which were originally intended to make it easier for emergency services but have become an absolute nightmare. We were told that the smaller localities were able to assist in calming the confusion. It has now been 10 years and we have seen 000 not having a clue where a street is in Charters Towers. This is unreasonable for these small towns. This weekend a fire claimed another home. The home owner's neighbour had difficulty explaining to the emergency services—triple 0—which suburb they lived in. They called twice, only to hear the sirens head in the wrong direction. That is not the fault of the emergency services but the suburb names. The people of Charters Towers are sick of this insanity. For half a decade we have seen unreasonable and unnecessary changes put people's lives at risk. I quote from a letter written by the person whose house was burnt down. It states—

My name is Stewart Koch, and I am the owner and the sole occupant, of the above property, which caught fire on 23rd May, 2015.

It goes on—

My entire history has been erased. My house was completely destroyed in the fire, along with all of my belongings, Photos, personal papers, everything.

He continues—

She (neighbour) called Triple 0 immediately, but was met with questions from the call centre operator that she struggled to answer.

'I said it was Wilson St in Charters Towers and they asked would it be a certain suburb,' she said. 'I guessed and said it could be in Alabama Hill or Towers Hill and (the operator) asked 'Is it Breddan?'

Breddan is a locality, or suburb, situated 20km from Charters near Sellheim. 'Then I got off the phone and waited for about 10 minutes and no one showed up.' ... 'After the second call we heard sirens, but they were travelling away from us so I rang again ...'

...

'It was just very stressful trying to direct the operator.

I table those two letters and that newspaper article.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Northern Miner*, dated 29 May 2015, titled 'Where? Suburb confusion' [\[504\]](#).

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 1 June 2015, from Mr Stewart Koch to the member for Dalrymple, Mr Shane Knuth MP, regarding a house fire at 9 Wilson Street, Charters Towers on 23 May 2015 [\[503\]](#).