




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.13 pm): I rise to speak to the estimates committee report of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee. I would like to thank the ministers, the chair, Mr Jim Pearce, the committee members and the staff for all of their hard work. I would also like to thank the departmental officers and the officers of statutory bodies who attended.

I would like to talk about Springvale Station. I asked the Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment the following—

With the recent acquisition of the Springvale Station, can the Deputy Premier confirm that the state government will continue to pay the local council rates in order to have the local council continue vital pest management and the upkeep of roads?

The Deputy Premier's response was that the state government does not pay rates but, instead, responsibly manages access routes and pests at a cost to the state and also gives grants and financial management guidance and funds some service levies. However, the Deputy Premier did not mention that, although the government purchased the property to protect the Great Barrier Reef, the government plans to mine the waterways for gold, tin and ore which, according to the environment minister, will not hurt the reef. However, the Australian Conservation Foundation has said—

The rivers of the Normanby Basin flood every wet season and all the disturbed material is washed downstream and into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, smothering sea grass meadows and nearby coral.

I question why the government spent \$6 million when it is allowing mining in the same river. I really believe that, during the federal election campaign, the federal opposition could have received green votes in the city area by creating the perception that Labor is doing wonderful things for the Great Barrier Reef, but, after the election is over, all of a sudden we have tin mining in that same river. It does not stack up. I really believe that in some sense it is very hypocritical.

With regard to the Big Rocks and Hell's Gate dam projects, I would also like to acknowledge the need for the minister and the department to work with the federal government to get these projects up and running. Yes, I appreciate the fact that the Minister for Natural Resources came to Charters Towers and had a look at the Big Rocks site. Not many ministers have been out there. It is very important that the state government works with the federal government on this project. I ask members to cast their minds back to the October 1987 stock market crash. At that time, Australia was doing it tough but North Queensland was prospering because we had completed the Burdekin Dam. The Big Rocks and Hell's Gate projects are great opportunities to provide water security for Townsville and the Burdekin. They will provide opportunities for development, particularly the Pentland biofuel project south of Pentland. They will also save money by resolving the issue of water restrictions for Townsville. I ask the government to build the Hell's Gate dam with the support of the federal government. That will resolve the issue of water security for Townsville.

I would also like to acknowledge the Minister for Environment for providing \$1.5 million in regard to moving the bats with a bat-tracking device. I know that \$500,000 has been given to the Charters Towers Regional Council. I really believe that that funding will be helpful, but the council needs to have a criteria of what it is supposed to do to move the bats. I ask the Minister for Environment to come to Charters Towers to speak to the council, because it wants to ensure that this will be good dollars well spent.

During the estimates committee hearing the minister announced that there were exemption fees for smaller timber millers who treated under 1,500 cubic metres of timber and used less harmful chemicals. This is good news for timber millers across the state, especially the small ones, who were paying \$10,000 in fees—the same amount that the big companies were paying. That was very discriminatory against these small timber operators. This exemption is going to help the Tablelands and help these timber millers in these regions.