



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (6.47 p.m.): Tonight my contribution is going to be about people affected by the RFA, such as Brian Gentry, a Gympie-based contractor who has been cutting, snagging and carting logs to Boral. He has an investment in plant and equipment of over \$1m and employs 10 workers. Last financial year Brian spent \$135,000 on fuel in Gympie and \$80,000 on tyres from a Gympie supplier, to say nothing of the thousands of dollars spent on parts, equipment and maintenance. With the closure of Boral, Brian will be joining the unemployment queue. His equipment is so design specific that it will be devalued by half. Brian's 10 employees, many of them young men with young families and home loans, will also be thrown out of work. Has the Government given any thought to the real cost to the communities arising from the closure of Boral? What comforting words does the Government offer Mr Brian Gentry? What does it tell his 10 workers and their families, who will suffer to service their mortgages to save their homes? What will it say to the fuel agent, the tyre distributor and all of the other Gympie businesses that depend on the turnover being injected into that economy by the timber industry workers whose jobs are under threat?

Has this Government really given any thought to the contractors who have worked long and hard to build up their businesses? Their life's work now amounts to nothing. How does the Government plan to ameliorate the impact on the Gympie community of the closure of Wayne Morris' Dagon sawmill, which will happen when he loses the source of his logs as a result of the closure of Boral? What does the Government plan to do to maintain the viability of this mill and the livelihood of Wayne Morris and his 12 to 15 employees?

There is no point in the Government continuing to boast about the 25 year guarantee of supply. There is a strong feeling amongst forestry officers that this promise cannot be kept. These forest rangers are the practical, experienced people who understand the forests, who have managed the forests very successfully for many years and who know what yields will be available.

These same officers who know that log supply is not available from the crumbs that have been left for the industry also know that most farm forestry plots will not be able to supply millable timber 25 years hence. Some of our real choice country may have the potential to produce good yields in that time, but the vast majority will take much, much longer.

This is not to mention Woodford's Mr Les Torrens, a timberworker for over 30 years who has owned his own business for over 11 years. His business is to supply timber bridge girders of suitable strength to Queensland Rail; the Main Roads Department in Toowoomba, Warwick and Roma; and local councils in south-east Queensland, including Kilcoy, Warwick and Boonah. Between September 1996 and September 1999 he supplied over 4,500 lineal metres of girder. In 1998-99 alone he supplied over 1,500 metres of girder. Due to the strength requirements of the timber required, he supplies grey ironbark girders. Guess what the RFA has done to this man? It has locked him out of the areas where he obtained permission to log wet area timber. He used to log in Jimna and Gallangowan, but not any more—locked up, no access.

Here is a copy of the open letter that he wrote to the Premier. This man has asked this Government: what will the Government do in relation to the small wooden bridges on the railway lines, main roads and local shire council roads that need maintenance? I am sure that eventually the State Government will come up with the funds required to make them all concrete and steel, but certainly not overnight. In the meantime, who repairs them, from whom will they get their timber and what quality of

timber will they receive? If the timber is not the right quality, grade and strength, can we then trust the bridges we have to drive across?

This man does not want to be forced out of his previously strong and viable business, but if he is, who compensates him? He is a relatively old man in the last of his working years. This Government has assigned him to the scrap yard on an aged pension with nothing to show for the years that he built his business up, because now he has no business at all to do or sell. What a legacy for a jobs, jobs, jobs Government! It is a very proud achievement when in just two electorates—Gympie and Toowoomba—two businesses are destroyed, two are drowning and gasping for breath, and some 25 jobs are sacrificed! That is just the tip of the iceberg. Peter Beattie should be a very, very proud Premier indeed!

One Nation is about to save some of the jobs that are still out there through the introduction of the right to harvest legislation this morning. Perhaps One Nation might be able to throw a bit of a lifeline to some of those people out there, but what does this Government intend to do and what about compensation? Is there really going to be compensation for all those people who are going to be down and out because of that RFA and the lock-up of the timber industry? This is about people—people who are contracted. Businesses are going to go under. I just mention this man in Gympie facing a \$500,000 loss.

Time expired.
