



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH**

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Hansard 20 July 1999

### **TIMBER INDUSTRY PROTEST**

**Mrs PRATT** (Barambah—IND) (7.12 p.m.): I rise today on a matter of great concern to the people who massed outside the walls of this Parliament today. The people gathered today to bring their words and their concerns to all who sit in this place. These are the people of the timber industry and they are concerned at the loss of jobs occasioned by the RFA proposal. For once, the employer and the employee are united, marching together against their Government's proposals and endeavouring to be heard. It is a rare thing to see employer and employee marching side by side. With them are the people of the towns—in some cases whole towns, including the mayors and the owner/operators of what would appear to many to be unassociated businesses.

In small towns every business is dependent upon all the other businesses, and when one hurts, they all hurt. The people in rural and regional Queensland would not normally take to the streets or make a fuss. The very fact that hundreds—no, thousands of them massed outside the walls of Parliament today shows that the last straw has finally been reached. The people of the smaller communities have day by day, week by week, year by year stood by as their industries have been stripped away—the pork, beef and mining industries, together with the proposed deregulation of the dairy industry, the threat to the peanut industry and now the threats to the timber industry and the salmon industry.

The people came here today to communicate in the only way that is left to them. They marched for a reasonable and workable joint solution to be reached between the industry and the Government—not a solution made by the Government and minority groups.

I have been told that it is not appropriate to wear this shirt in this Parliament and I have to ask why. This is the history of those who marched today. It tells the story of the timber industry from the first tree that was ever felled on this land right up until today. The people in the industry sustainably farm the forests, work the forests and protect the forests as if their lives depended upon them—as they do. These people are worried that their voices will not be heard by this Government, which is pushing for more plantations.

All who farm the land know the concerns of plantation farming. Plantation farming leads to increases in diseases and pests which spread to native forests. There is increased usage of herbicides and pesticides which are required to control pests in order to produce good yields when a one-species crop is grown. We see degradation of land through the choosing of poor sites, poor design and poor management. We have depletion of water reserves during periods of drought when native timbers have to compete for moisture, causing wells and bores to dry up and a lowering of the water table. People who work in the forestry industry are aware of these concerns.

Those who marched today have been forced to voice their concerns for not only their jobs but also for the environment. They have displayed this concern in a manner that is out of character. They have marched in the streets of Brisbane in an endeavour to communicate and get their message heard in any way they can. Many travelled long distances and spent up to seven hours on buses. Business owners/operators closed for the day to enable not just their workers but themselves to join the march.

That is why I wore this shirt today. It carries the words of those without to the eyes of those within. I cannot think of a more appropriate thing for a people's representative to do. After all, it is my job. It is why I am here. I must say that I am glad I wore this shirt because I did not see the Premier or

any Labor members of this House among the crowd. I did, however, see many marchers wearing the shirts of the AWU and I am proud of them.

This T-shirt carries the voice of the people; it tells of their history, their hopes, their concerns and their fears. I cannot think of anything more appropriate than to have the words of the people conveyed to the members of this House in the people's own words. The people who marched today have heard the words of this Government and they are not convinced. That is why 3,500 people marched today.

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