



Speech by

GEOFF WILSON

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Hansard 30 October 1999

TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (6.51 p.m.): I rise to support the Government's amendment. I must say that I am astonished that the Liberal Party and the National Party are opposed to the Government's initiative of calling upon the Federal Government to provide \$100m to support new tree-clearing guidelines in Queensland. I am astonished to hear that members of the Liberal Party and the National Party are opposed to the urgent implementation of consistent, commonsense and practical Statewide guidelines for responsible land management practices. I am astonished that that is where the Liberal Party and the National Party stand on this issue.

If members of the Liberal Party and the National Party were right in their assertions here tonight that voluntary tree-clearing guidelines are going to work, they had two and a half years when the coalition was in power in this State during which they had every opportunity to make voluntary tree-clearing guidelines work; yet unprecedented tree clearing took place. There was no mention during that time of mandatory tree-clearing guidelines. Members of the coalition certainly were not saying that there should be mandatory tree-clearing guidelines. They were saying that there should be voluntary tree-clearing guidelines. But during that time, when every landowner had the opportunity to adopt a voluntary system, no-one did. In fact, during that time we saw the highest rate of tree clearing ever recorded in this State and in this country.

The evidence contradicts and defeats the National Party's and Liberal Party's arguments. I must say that it is time that things changed. Their attitude—"don't you worry about that"—might have worked years and years ago in the seventies, the eighties and the nineties, but as we come into the new millennium it is time to make a decision about all Queenslanders' interests in this crucial issue.

I ask members to look at the history of conservation and responsible land management under the National Party. In 1989, when the Goss Government won office after 32 years of sorry, sorry Government by the National Party in this State, only 2% of Queensland's biodiversity was protected in national parks—the lowest of any State in Australia. Now, just 10 years on—and thanks to the Labor Governments that we have had in this State—4% is protected.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Western Downs will cease interjecting.

Mr WILSON: Recently, the State Lands and Tree Cover Study—the SLATS data— showed that between 1995 and 1997, tree clearing in Queensland reached record levels. Those facts contradict the blind assertion that members opposite make that a voluntary system will work. They are guilty of the fallacy of wishing it were so.

The idea of introducing vegetation management guidelines across all tenures is not just an issue for our farmers and graziers; it is an issue for our urban areas, as well. It applies in Mount Nebo, Mount Glorious and other places on the D'Aguilar Range, where recently—in the last three months—1,600 trees on 440 hectares on Mount O'Reilly were cut down unilaterally by a freehold landowner. They were cut down many months after a development application was lodged with the Pine Rivers Shire Council and then withdrawn. Those trees were cut down—to the consternation of the entire local community. It took the Pine Rivers Shire Council—because of the limitations of its local

law—six weeks to apply a vegetation preservation order. But the horse had already bolted and 1,600 trees had been cut down.

The council, quite rightly, had relied upon the trust of the landowners. But the problem is that under a voluntary system 95% of landowners do the right thing and 5% do not do the right thing. But who is to say who is going to be part of that 5%? We do not know until after the event. That is why a mandatory system must be adopted. I call upon the Pine Rivers Shire Council to adopt a mandatory system through its local law. There must be a moratorium declared by the Pine Rivers Shire Council. It should also adopt the Logan City Council's by-law and the Brisbane City Council's by-law to apply a general preservation of trees across the whole shire. This would be an interim step until we reached Statewide agreement on all these critical issues.

Time expired.
