



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard 25 March 1999

CYPRESS INDUSTRY, WESTERN QUEENSLAND

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (6.13 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'Parliament' and insert—

'Endorses the State Government's commitment to deliver certainty and security to the Queensland cypress pine industry and further endorses the Government's commitment to jobs in rural and regional Queensland.' "

Let me reiterate one more time: this Government is committed to the cypress pine industry; this Government is committed to the industry 100%. Anyone who heard what the Premier said in this place on the matter yesterday could not argue otherwise. The Premier said—

"My Government is committed to the cypress pine industry. It is the lifeblood of many Queensland regional towns. I endorse the public position taken by the Minister for Primary Industries."

My position is perfectly clear. I refer to the Courier-Mail of this Tuesday. I said in that article—

"This Government is about giving security and certainty to the timber industry.

My department is completing a public benefits test on the industry and I have instructed that it be on my table by the end of this week.

Jobs have priority in situations like this."

Jobs had priority in the dairy industry review; this Government made sure of that. People finished ahead of the National Competition Policy in the dairy industry. This Government ensured that a regulated farm gate price received by dairy farmers for the market milk was retained. This Government was not prepared to leave dairy farmers and their families to fend for themselves against the forces of full deregulation.

The Government made that decision because it was in the best interests of the dairy farmers, their families and their communities, and that meant jobs. This is the approach that this Government is taking in relation to the cypress pine industry. Can I make it clearer than that? Let me refer to the Premier's comments again. Let me repeat the Premier's position on National Competition Policy in this matter. He said—

"... I will never, nor will my Government, put economic rationalism ahead of jobs."

That is perfectly clear.

Last night I had the opportunity to meet with a number of cypress pine industry representatives to discuss a number of issues. It was a prearranged meeting, but it was opportune as I could relay to that meeting the Premier's comments to the House. The industry representatives asked me to pass on to the Premier their thanks for his commitment. The cypress pine industry is critical to many western communities including Augathella, Roma, Injune and many more.

I have visited almost every cypress pine sawmill in western Queensland since I became a member of this Assembly. How many One Nation members opposite have visited them? None! All they

are doing is coming into this place to score cheap political mileage from the misfortunes and the uncertainty of people who are trying to eke out a living from the cypress pine industry. They should hang their heads in shame. They are not here to protect the interests of or to help the people in the cypress pine industry; they are here to continue their verbal attack on the National Competition Policy. Those poor people from those small western Queensland towns are being used as pawns by members of the One Nation Party to kick the National Competition Policy. I am going to make sure that, when I meet with those people in the cypress pine industry of western Queensland, I let them know what those members are on about.

While I am on my feet, I want to say that I am thoroughly disgusted with the previous Government, because the cypress pine industry representatives who spoke to me told me that they had made continuous representations to members of that Government from 1996 onwards and their requests fell on deaf ears. But as soon as we in this Government realised there was a problem, what did we do? We fixed it, because as a Government we believe in industries in rural towns because they are the lifeblood of those towns. If the sawmills go from those towns, jobs will go and, as a consequence, the economies will die. I ask the House to support my amendment.

Time expired.
