



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard 27 May 1999

REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (6.30 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment to the motion. This Government recognises the need to provide security and certainty for the timber industry, associated sectors and dependent communities. The RFA process provides us with an historic opportunity to provide that security and certainty. This Government is about delivering that security and certainty. We do this because we value the contribution that the timber industry makes to Queensland.

This Government is committed to the timber industry. This Government is committed to an RFA outcome that looks after jobs and the future of regional communities. There is a stark contrast between the commitment of this Government and the failure of the former Borbidge Government. The former Premier, the member for Surfers Paradise, signed a scoping agreement with Prime Minister Howard in January 1997. It promised to complete the RFA by 30 June 1998. Of course, it failed. It failed dismally.

Once it had signed the agreement, the former Borbidge Government began ducking and weaving. It signed us up, but it refused to meet its commitment. The members of the One Nation Party should understand this. The members of the One Nation Party would know that this Government is committed to the timber industry. As the members of the One Nation Party would know, as the Minister for Primary Industries, I have worked closely with the rural communities and the timber industry and also the associated bodies that are involved in the timber industry.

Unlike the members of the National Party, such as the honourable member for Gympie, and the members of the One Nation Party, I have not sought to run around playing on the concerns of the people affected by the RFA. Unlike the members of the coalition and the One Nation Party, I have not sought to turn the RFA process into a political stunt. It is a scientific process—not a political campaign. I have listened to community concerns and I, along with my colleagues, have been working hard to address these concerns. It is an approach that the coalition should adopt now. Indeed, it is an approach that the coalition should have adopted when it was in Government. Instead, the coalition gave Queensland inaction and incompetence. It failed Queensland on the RFA process—a process that it signed Queensland up to.

The member for Lockyer talks about "scientific fact rather than emotion". It begs the question that if he believes that, why did he not support the Government's amended motion last Tuesday night? Unfortunately, the member for Lockyer keeps turning to the National Party for guidance, but the National Party is on the nose. Surely, the member for Lockyer knows that. At the last election, the people of Lockyer said loud and clear that they did not want a National Party member, but the member for Lockyer keeps giving the people in Lockyer the National Party treatment.

If the member for Lockyer was interested in the RFA issue and if he was interested in getting the outcome that looks after jobs and the future of regional communities, then he would ignore the National Party. If he was genuine about an outcome based on "scientific fact rather than emotion", then he and his colleagues would ignore the coalition. The members of the coalition are not interested in science. The members of the coalition are interested in emotion. The members of the coalition are interested in turning emotion into political stunts and creating uncertainty and insecurity in the community.

I would be pleased to see the member for Lockyer start putting people ahead of political stunts. I would be pleased to see the member for Lockyer start putting science ahead of political stunts and emotion. Unfortunately, I do not believe that the member for Lockyer will do that tonight. Unfortunately, from listening to the member speak this evening, I do not believe that he is capable of doing that. Unfortunately, the member for Lockyer, who is a relative newcomer to this place and not a bad bloke, believes that politics are more important than people on this matter, but our Government does not share that view.

I look forward to the finalisation of the RFA agreement for south-east Queensland and sincerely hope that it will be supported by the members opposite for the very sound reasons outlined by this Government. If only the Borbidge Government had got its act together in the first place this matter would have been finalised last year. While the members of the coalition and One Nation try to make political mileage out of this issue, this Government is out there getting on with the job of achieving the best outcome for jobs and regional communities. At the end of the day, that is what Governments are there for. Governments are there to listen to the concerns of the communities, to listen to the interest groups' concerns and then make rational and reasonable decisions as a result of listening to those concerns. That is different to the members of the coalition and the One Nation Party, who are out there working on people's emotions and bringing insecurity and uncertainty to the industry.
