



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.32 p.m.): The Deputy Premier said that the Queensland coalition left the RFA in the bottom drawer for the incoming Labor Government to fix. Tonight I would like to tell the Parliament exactly what he found in the bottom drawer, how he got his fingers jammed in that very drawer and who jammed them.

What was found was the result of a mountain of work with numerous assessments completed or nearing completion and a community consultation process that was open and workable. What was found was the result of thousands of hours of work by hardworking public servants, industry representatives, Government Ministers and the general public. During 1997-98, we conducted a comprehensive assessment of the full range of social, economic, environmental and heritage values in the south-east Queensland forest estate, making available the best information ever collected about the region's forests. No stone was left unturned in presenting a professional and scientific document that took into consideration associated socioeconomic indicators, a special factor negotiated with the Commonwealth Government.

What the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources found in his drawer was a mountain of hard work resulting from the blood, sweat and tears of the various people whom I have mentioned. It was he who advised the Deputy Premier that the process had stopped. He is playing very loosely with the truth, because everyone knows that it was the Environment Minister in the first instance who, with the support of the Deputy Premier, deliberately changed the RFA from a scientific process to a political outcome by deliberately manufacturing the processes to meet the ALP's election commitments to the Greens.

The Deputy Premier stated his concern about how the coalition was conducting the RFA. I can advise the House that he is now taking our advice. In this House I called for the Government to rerun the SKED model and save jobs. Do members opposite remember that? The Deputy Premier did better than that. He contracted a firm of consultants to advise him on the SKED model, to find out whether what I and the industry were saying was right. His worst fears were realised and his fingers were hurting like never before as the report confirmed my statements in this House that the Government should have published additional SKED model runs. He has the draft report in his possession and it says just that.

The Deputy Premier was in a jam that was forced on him by the Socialist Left. In other words: he put it over you, Jim. The Government has been exposed by its own consultant's report. The Socialist Left Minister for the Environment and Heritage was deliberately misrepresenting the data. The Government has used the most negative and conservative parameters in every instance possible to run the SKED model, to establish a sawlog supply of 83,309 cubic metres. The directions report states that using this model shows the sawlog allocation should be reduced by 23% in order to achieve a sustainable yield. That has now proved to be incorrect.

It was the Minister for the Environment who slammed the drawer closed on the Deputy Premier's fingers. The Minister for the Environment has had his staff busily interfering with the RFA process and will not let departmental staff do their job to produce a true scientific document. The

Deputy Premier knows what the Minister for the Environment has been up to and he is now taking the coalition's advice rather than that of his parliamentary colleague from the Socialist Left.

If the Deputy Premier had any intention of saving jobs, he should have published the consultant's report and a full range of results from the SKED model, from the least to the most conservative. If we get the full range, then we will have an idea of exactly what options are available. Previously they kept the options down to the most negative and conservative figures that they could find. I say to the Deputy Premier and the Labor Government: save jobs in communities, publish the reports on the SKED results and get your fingers out of a jam. There is no need to lose any of those jobs. Labor's plan is to create jobs by getting the Aussie lumberjack to pick flowers, paint rocks and make dried arrangements. Can anyone imagine how that will work? It failed at Maryborough and at Fraser Island. A little while ago, the Minister talked about ancillary jobs. That type of thing will be an absolute disaster.

The Minister said that we did not deliver by 30 June, but we did not have to deliver by 30 June. We set a target for that time, but we did not have to deliver. It would have been irresponsible had we delivered at that time because the work had not been completed. It was an absolutely massive operation and it had to be done properly. The Minister talked about 30 June; that does not matter. We try to make targets if we can, but one cannot always do so. We did what we could.

Time expired.
