



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): "No child will live in poverty." Do members remember that statement by Bob Hawke? Do honourable members also remember "Lock, stock and barrel", by Mike Ahern; "Primary producers breeding dingoes for profit", by Rod Welford; "Primary producers' wives driving road trains to town to rot the diesel fuel rebate", by David Hamill; "In December, fires seen at 30,000 feet from Brisbane to Charters Towers as evidence of panic tree clearing", by Peter Beattie, 1999—

Mr Springborg: Biggles.

Mr HOBBS: Yes, that is about it. We are seeing an absolutely blatant attempt by this Government to bring in tree-clearing guidelines, according to this amendment, "along with commitments given to the people of Queensland prior to the last State election". The only people to whom the Government gave a commitment were the Greens. The Government had nothing to do with the primary producers, who currently are suffering.

The Deputy Premier said that he was able to distinguish between freehold land and leasehold land. In fact, what occurred was the normal management, end of year annual maintenance burn-off program. For the benefit of the members opposite, I point out that the process involves moisture being present in the ground, the farmers undertaking a burn-off and then the grass growing back quickly. That is a sustainable management practice that has been in place for many, many years and will be in place for years to come.

I refer to the whole tree-clearing debate. At present, much of the focus has been on the detail, not on what is happening. Is the issue greenhouse gas emissions? Is it environmental biodiversity? Is it degradation? Is it salinity? Or is the issue the Federal Government? In the short time that I have, I will go through quickly those issues. The issue is not greenhouse gas emissions, because in Queensland we create 78 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions with our tree clearing. Under the Kyoto Protocol of 2010, we can go to 90 million tonnes. The thickening process creates 140 million tonnes of greenhouse gas credits. The documents are available for everyone to see. We are not in breach of any greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, 40% of the cleared country will go back to regrowth and 60% is regrowth in the first place. So the majority of the land will have vegetation of some type on it in a very short period. We are not losing that amount of timber cover. In many instances, the land is going back to regrowth. So the environmental biodiversity is not changing dramatically. In some areas, it may because the land might be used for farming, particularly in cane-growing areas.

A little while ago, the Premier talked about sustainable development. Is he saying that those practices are not sustainable? In most cases, they are. In some few cases, the practices may not be correct but, under a normal land management program, such practices could be corrected. In relation to salinity, no evidence at all has been given to this House that salinity has been or will be a problem in Queensland. We are not saying that we are not cautious about the salinity issue; we are very aware that we do not want salinity to occur. Much has been said about Robert Hill and the Federal Government forcing the State Government to do this. We drafted the agreement and the previous Premier signed it. There is room to move in that document. It is wrong for anyone to say that one has to put in hard and fast rules to comply with the Federal Government protocols. That is wrong.

Mr Welford: So you were deceiving the Federal Government, were you?

Mr HOBBS: Let me put it this way: we wrote the document and we put in enough room to move. That can be done. The Minister is fiddling the figures. He said that there is only 18% regrowth when, in fact, in my time as Minister there was 60% to 70% regrowth. Even the permits are in the 50% to 60% range, so how come they are going back to 18%? The Minister has been manipulating the figures.

Mr Welford: I didn't say 18%.

Mr HOBBS: It says so in that document. That is a significant amount. There is no reason that we cannot put in place a voluntary code of practice that provides the flexibility that is required under the Federal guidelines. Presently, butcher shops, abattoirs and numerous other organisations use self assessment. We can do that in the same way. It will not cost what the Minister claims. He has plucked the figure of \$120m out of the air, and that is not an insignificant figure.

Time expired.
