



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.34 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the shadow Minister for Natural Resources. If carried by the House, this motion will restore some logic to the regional forest agreement process. It provides security for the south-east Queensland timber industry, it provides for the preservation of our forests and their continued use by other industries and community groups, such as graziers, beekeepers, trail riders and bushwalkers. That is exactly what the RFA was intended to do.

The South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement is due to be signed by 30 June. It will be the blueprint for the management of the south-east Queensland forestry industry. But since the election of the Beattie Government, we have seen a calculated campaign to overturn the spirit of the RFA and to implement its own destructive and job destroying biodiversity policy.

The Beattie Government has attacked the original intent of the RFA process on three fronts. Stakeholders have been shut out of the development of the RFA. The open and transparent process which the Borbidge Government operated has been sacrificed for the sake of backroom deals between the Minister and the environmental movement. The landmark interim management agreement signed by the former Premier and the Howard Government was hailed widely by all groups as the first display of genuine cooperation on forest issues in this country. That is a testament to the Borbidge Government's balanced handling of the RFA issue, which has so far gone unmatched.

The second attack on the intent of the RFA has been a deliberate go-slow campaign, which will now almost certainly lead to the Beattie Government's failure to meet the 30 June deadline. Both the comprehensive regional assessment report and the social assessment report were completed prior to the June State election and were due for release prior to Christmas. Those \$11m reports are the result of two and a half years of studies and data collection. But this Government suppressed them and released them only a few weeks ago.

The options report, due in April, will give people barely a month—just a month—to digest and make comments on the RFA options on which their livelihoods will depend. Finally, the Natural Resources Minister, who likes to sit opposite and interject continually, has blatantly attacked the RFA process and the timber industry by sabotaging the data on which the forest decisions are to be made. As a result, the assessment of the sustainability of Queensland's native timber forests is seriously flawed.

The DPI review into the potential wood supply from Crown forests in south-east Queensland uses computer modelling systems which simulate wood yield from the forest based on a number of scenarios. Similar to any computer model, it is highly sensitive to many assumptions that must be made to make these models run. The current sawlog allocation from Crown native forests in south-east Queensland is 108,000 cubic metres per year. However, by using the most negative and conservative assumptions possible, at the direction of the Minister for Natural Resources, DPI Forestry's 1998 review came up with a figure of 83,309 cubic metres per annum as the sustainable log supply.

Mr Littleproud: That was a fiddle, was it?

Mr SEENEY: Of course it was a fiddle. It is worth repeating that, by using different and equally valid assumptions, that computer model can come up with a figure of 150,000 cubic metres per annum as the sustainable log supply. If improved forest management practices were implemented, the sustainable sawlog supply could be as high as 350,000 cubic metres.

It is most important to remember that we are not just talking about numbers on a piece of paper. We are talking about people and their future. The Beattie Government's actions will determine the future of thousands of jobs—real jobs, not pretend, make-believe, let's pick flowers jobs—and they will determine the future of dozens of rural communities where those people live.

The South East Queensland RFA represents a tremendous opportunity to introduce a comprehensive management system for our forests. But this Government's bumbling and Labor's biodiversity policy have severely compromised the RFA. Those jobs and the future of those communities have been sold out in a factional deal in an attempt to repay the extreme anti-everything conservation groups for their support at the last election.

Regardless of any scientific evidence to support it, Labor's policy calls for the native timber industry to be shut down. Whereas the coalition Government pursued a balanced policy which guaranteed the future of the timber industry and a comprehensive reserve system, this Government is blindly pursuing an emotive and illogical agenda. This should not be a debate that pits jobs against the environment. There is room for both the industry's needs and the community's environmental expectations to be met. There is room for a sustainable timber industry in south-east Queensland. I urge members to support the motion moved by the member for Keppel.
