



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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### **TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (6.47 p.m.): I rise to lend my support to the motion moved by the member for Warwick calling for the completion of the independent economic and social impact studies before the introduction of mandatory tree-clearing restrictions on freehold land. That is the motion we are debating. It is a measure of their embarrassment over their record on this issue that not one Government member spoke to the motion. Speaking of embarrassment, I do not think I have seen a more embarrassing contribution to a debate in this House in the time that I have been here than the one we just witnessed from the Minister for Primary Industries. He is an embarrassment not only to his party but also to the primary industries he purports to represent.

It is only reasonable that those studies should determine the impacts of these mandatory development restrictions on the environment, rural freehold property values, property productivity and viability and, most importantly, rural jobs, rural communities and the people who live there. They are important, too. The people of rural Queensland—the land-holders and those who live in communities that have a primary production-based economy—will have to live with whatever is decided for a long time to come. The Green fanatics and the Left Wing of the Labor Party will go on to another issue next week. The decision will probably give them a warm inner glow for a couple of days, but they will not otherwise be affected—secure and remote, as they no doubt are, in their comfortable urban existence.

The debate about this issue has been dominated by hysterical emotive claims from the Left Wing of the Labor Party. The issue has been deliberately clouded by a propaganda campaign that has set out to demonise and vilify farmers and rural land-holders across the State. In recent months we have seen one of the most cynical and dishonest propaganda campaigns ever mounted in Queensland politics. It is the type of cynical and dishonest propaganda that I hope never to see again in Queensland politics.

It has been a propaganda campaign that, with the cooperation of the urban media, hungry for cheap sensationalism, has set out to demonise the people of rural Queensland as environmental vandals; as irresponsible resource managers intent on destroying the very land that sustains them; almost as kindergarten children not able to take responsibility for what they are doing. The current emotive, highly charged environment is not one conducive to sensible decision making. There needs to be a level-headed and balanced approach to this issue, which certainly will have major impacts on rural land-holders across the State and the businesses they run. These restrictions will certainly have major impacts on the productivity and the viability of rural enterprises. Therefore, they will inevitably affect capital values. These restrictions will inevitably affect jobs in rural areas and the viability of rural communities. It cannot be reasonably argued otherwise.

It would seem reasonable to any fair thinking person that the Queensland Government should determine what those impacts are likely to be before they make a decision that will affect the livelihoods of many land-holders, the people they employ and the rural communities that they depend on. It would seem reasonable to determine what the cost of this ideologically driven proposal is going to be before the decisions are made. What is the outcome in terms of the economic and social costs? It would seem reasonable to quantify what the benefits are likely to be and to whom those benefits are likely to accrue before rushing headlong into what appears to be a simplistic solution.

The State Government, the Premier and more particularly the Minister for Natural Resources have done none of those things that commonsense would dictate as fair and reasonable. Instead, they have sought to dishonestly demonise the people who have the most to lose and very little to gain from their ideologically driven agenda. They have engineered a strategy to set rural land-holders up as scapegoats, completely ignoring and belittling the knowledge and the skills they have built up over generations of land management. The Premier has demonstrated his contempt for those people with his nose pressed against the window of the Government jet 40,000 feet in the air setting himself up as an expert on resource management issues.

Instead of meaningful involvement in a scientifically based process that is balanced and objective, rural land-holders have been subject to a continual flow of ideological rubbish that has no practical focus. Such an approach serves only to cause alarm in rural Queensland. Tragically, in too many cases it brings about the opposite result to what responsible stakeholders are trying to achieve. It is time to put an end to the hysteria. It is time to recognise the great wealth of expertise and experience that exists in resource management both within the rural community and within the Department of Natural Resources. It is time for a scientifically based approach in order to achieve acceptable outcomes.

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