



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

Hansard 11 March 1999

RURAL QUEENSLAND

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.39 p.m.): I am absolutely amazed as I sit here and listen to the honourable member for Logan complaining about National Competition Policy. As I recollect it, when the policy was signed the now member for Logan was listed in the Government Directory as senior adviser to the Premier. He advised the Premier to sign it!

Tonight we have an opportunity to do something positive. All sides of politics have an opportunity to demonstrate just how committed we are to progressing rural Queensland. We have an opportunity to commit ourselves to the protection of over 1,000 timber industry jobs and we have an opportunity to commit ourselves to providing fair compensation to farmers and graziers throughout this State.

Tonight the State coalition has put a motion before the House that should have total bipartisan support. However, the tragedy is that this Labor Government wants to amend the motion. What we see tonight is a Labor Party trying to wriggle out of making a rock-solid commitment to issues of fundamental justice and fundamental equity. We see a Government trying to dilute its professed commitment to jobs and a Premier trying to dilute his professed commitment to leading a Government for all Queenslanders.

In the first part of this decade the Labor Government left a dark stain across rural Queensland. It left a stain of lost services and starved funding. That is a very sad legacy. In our two and a half years in Government, the coalition did much to reverse that horrific trend. The dark stain of Labor is still there. It has not been forgotten. That is why there is mounting outrage over this Labor Government's handling of a number of critical rural issues. The other day we heard a startling allegation by the Minister for Natural Resources. He said that despite the fact that dingoes cost primary producers probably \$5,000 each in mauled sheep and cattle, they were bothering to breed them so that they could get a \$10 bounty.

Tonight this Minister basically indicated that now we will see mandatory tops-down tree-clearing guidelines on freehold land, similar to what we see on leasehold land. Proposed vegetation guidelines on freehold land have producers worried sick. Even this evening my colleague the member for Mirani alerted me to the concerns of graziers in the Nebo area. Those concerns are widespread throughout Queensland, including in my very own electorate of Warwick.

Not only is this Government's proposed review of vegetation protection on freehold land a cause for major concern, but so is this Government's display of complete arrogance in refusing to compensate land-holders for lost water allocations resulting from the WAMP process.

On the issue of arrogance and injustice, this Government's handling of the regional forestry agreements must be highlighted. The RFA process in south-east Queensland was working well under the Borbidge Government. Industry groups, recreation groups and environmental groups were all working well, and they were working together to get a fair and just outcome. But now those industry and recreation groups have been frozen out of the process. The only players now are the radical elements of the environment movement.

In the last few days my colleague the member for Keppel has asked a number of questions of the Minister for Natural Resources about his intentions in relation to the regional forestry agreement process. My colleague has asked for a public guarantee from this Government that the 1,000 jobs in

the timber industry that it is speculated will be lost will in fact be safe. My colleague has asked for a guarantee that beekeepers will not be at a loss as a result of losing their site permits in forestry areas.

There are also concerns as to whether graziers who have forestry leases will be able to continue with those leases. Even trail riders who conduct numerous rides through forestry reserves throughout south-east Queensland have been warned to start preparing to cease their legitimate recreational pursuits on public land. It is clear that the RFA process in south-east Queensland is going to underpin one of the most massive job losses of the decade. The Minister has not guaranteed that no timber jobs will be lost. That is an indictment on any Government but particularly on one that has a professed a commitment to job creation throughout this State.

Small and large millers alike are terrified at the prospect of what the RFA process will mean for their futures and the futures of their families and communities. On 30 June we will see if this Government is fair dinkum about its commitment to jobs and to doing the right thing under the RFA process. Or will its real agenda be exposed? Once again we are bracing ourselves for a Labor Government which has a track record of destroying rural and regional jobs.

In the brief time I was Minister for Natural Resources I not only approved a range of job-creating water infrastructure projects that have since been frozen by the can't do Premier and can't do Government; I also moved to address the concerns of graziers, who feared that their grazing forestry leases would be terminated or not renewed. When I became Minister I immediately moved to ensure that all grazing leases——

Time expired.
