



Speech by

**Dr LESLEY CLARK**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Hansard 25 May 1999

### **REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT**

**Dr CLARK** (Barron River—ALP) (6.37 p.m.): This House debated an Opposition motion with respect to the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement on 13 April in the last sitting of Parliament. At the conclusion of that debate, the Parliament actually supported an amendment put forward by the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources. I think it is worth reminding the House what that amendment was. It states that the Parliament—

"... acknowledges the continuing efforts of this Government to successfully conclude a Regional Forestry Agreement for South East Queensland that provides for the maintenance and creation of sustainable long term jobs in timber and timber product industries and protection for areas of high conservation value.

Further, that this Parliament urges the Commonwealth Government to work in good faith with the Queensland Government to provide the best possible Regional Forest Agreement outcome for all Queenslanders."

That motion was passed in this Parliament just four weeks ago. What has happened since then? What is different? Certainly nothing has happened as far as the Government is concerned, because that commitment is as rock solid now as it was then.

However, what has changed is that there has been a publication of the directions report, which I have read, that a number—

**Mr Hobbs:** How about the new one that says that the model is a much wider range of—

**Dr CLARK:** I will come to the member's point in just a moment. Yes, a directions report has outlined a number of indicative scenarios to assist in the formulation of the regional forest agreement, but I do not believe that it was that. I believe that the difference between then and now is the publication last Friday of the timber industry's regional forest development plan, which I have also read. I believe that this debate is a purely political ploy so that the Opposition can go out to those communities and say, "We have rejected their plan." That is what tonight's debate is all about. Let us be clear on what is going on here.

In the wording of tonight's motion, it is claimed that the plan will increase jobs in the south-east Queensland hardwood timber industry through improved productivity, improved forest management and the development of hardwood plantations. By trying to make us reject those words, the Opposition is hoping to be able to go out and say that we reject the forest plan and we are destroying jobs. It is also being deliberately mischievous in relation to the AWU's involvement in this matter. It knows as well as we do that it is a part of that plan. This motion is all about trying to create division. It is not about being constructive. This is not the time for party politics. The Opposition should be encouraging people to look at the directions report and make submissions. The report mentions the matter raised by the member for Warrego. I am very much aware of what the directions report states. I am pleased to note that in response to those problems, which are recognised in this report, it states—

"A further rigorous assessment of the Queensland sustained yield system by nationally recognised experts will be carried out before an RFA is finalised."

I want to know the validity of those assumptions just as much as members opposite do. I will be pleased to hear the findings of that report. We are not covering up this issue and pretending that there are no problems. We are saying that it will be examined further.

Let us see where we are going. If I am right and the Opposition is trying to bypass this whole process that we have gone through—as the member said, all of the blood, sweat and tears associated with all of the reports that have been produced—why did it bother to go through that process if, at this moment, it is instead going to abandon the process and the reports and just sign the industry plan? If it does that, it knows what it is signing on to. It will be signing on to conflict and it will be giving away the opportunity of having a win/win situation. The Opposition knows that in respect of the industry plan the figure of 200,000 hectares under the reserve system has been described by the conservation movement as a joke. The Opposition and I know that the conservation movement will never accept——

Time expired.

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