



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 27 October 1999

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.18 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after "That this House" and insert—

'congratulates the Beattie Government for securing the historic Regional Forest Agreement for South-east Queensland which creates hundreds of new jobs while preserving areas of high conservation value;

notes the strong support given to this agreement by both the conservation movement and the timber industry as well as the broader community, especially those communities which rely on timber supply for their viability; and

condemns the State National and Liberal parties for failing to do anything to help in obtaining federal funding to help implement the agreement.'."

I have a clear message for the destructive elements of the Opposition, both federally and within this State, who are trying to undermine and wreck our win-win forestry agreement. The message is very clear: our agreement with the timber industry and the conservation movement is rock solid and will be introduced to safeguard communities, phase out logging of native forests and create extra jobs.

I am pleased to report to Parliament that the Federal and Queensland Governments have established a top-level working group to assess the level of Commonwealth funding for the State's historic native forests agreement. It is important to stress that the working group's task is not to decide whether the Federal Government will support the agreement or not; it is a question of determining the level of funding.

I met with Prime Minister John Howard, Deputy Premier Jim Elder, Federal Forestry Minister Wilson Tuckey and senior officers from both levels of Government to form this working group. I was heartened by the meeting in Canberra. The Prime Minister promised to give Queensland a "fair" amount of money and I thank him for that commitment. He told me that the Commonwealth was "obviously prepared to provide financial assistance" but the Queensland agreement needed to mesh with the native forest principles.

We are confident that Queensland's agreement—which saves timber jobs and forests—will meet those principles. The Commonwealth provided us with a list of questions to which State officials have already responded. Those answers, plus face to face meetings between senior Commonwealth and State officials, are forming the basis of the assessment.

The south-east Queensland regional forest agreement will cost more than \$80m to fully implement. We are seeking a contribution from the Commonwealth of up to \$36m. Whatever the level of funding, we will implement our plan because it will save timber town communities, phase out logging in native forests and provide extra jobs, as well as plantation timber in hardwood plantations.

So the Prime Minister is talking constructively. But what are the State National/Liberal Parties doing to lobby for Federal funding to help implement this historic agreement? Nothing! How much lobbying has the National Party done to help obtain cash from Canberra for the people it purports to represent to create the jobs that we want? Nothing! How many times has the Opposition Leader rung the Prime Minister to persuade him to provide the \$36m that we are seeking to create new jobs in regional Queensland? The answer is that the National Party has done nothing other than play base,

simple, crude politics—nothing else! The members opposite are undermining jobs and they are being anti-Queensland, as they are anti the bush. Once again, the National Party has demonstrated that it does not care about the people of rural and regional Queensland and that it is not fit to govern and will not be for another generation. Once again, the Opposition Leader has shown that he does not give a jot about people such as those in the timber town communities to whom we have given a lifeline. He just sees them as pawns in some cheap political game.

What we are doing is improving on the regional forest agreement process by safeguarding the jobs not for 15 years, 20 years or 50 years, but for hundreds of years. Any timberworker who wants a job in the timber industry will have a job in the timber industry. We are protecting native forests for all time for future generations—for our children and their children. This is another triumph for my style of consultative government, which means that we are solving all the major problems, such as native title, the regional forest agreement and land clearing, which the Borbidge Government failed to address. On these issues the members opposite were complete failures. We are solving the problems.

The central elements of the plan are 350 extra jobs in net terms at the very, very least; an increase of 425,000 hectares in the amount of native forests protected from logging; the planting of 10 million trees; and the end of all logging in native forests by the year 2024.

Let me conclude by saying that the member for Noosa is clearly out to destroy the Mapleton and Conondale Ranges. That is clearly what he is about.
