



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 11 March 1999

RURAL QUEENSLAND

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (6.08 p.m.) I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'Parliament' and insert—

'notes the Beattie Government is actively protecting and promoting the future of rural Queensland's industries and jobs by—

- (a) lobbying the Federal Government to avoid the imposition of a range of debilitating taxes on rural communities, especially the GST;
- (b) ensuring the assessment and fair allocation of the State's water resources through an excellent program of water allocation management plan assessments; and
- (c) engaging the community, industry and local government comprehensively in the planning of the future of our State's forest resources and the sustainable management of rural lands.'

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That was unparliamentary and I ask the member to withdraw. You called the Minister "stupid". Stand up and withdraw.

Mr COOPER: I withdraw.

Mr WELFORD: Listen to the hypocrites from across the road! Listen to what they have gone on about! Let us look at their record in Government on every one of the issues that they are agitating on tonight.

Firstly, on compensation, they made a last-minute grab for political power with an agreement that was never budgeted for. The coalition Government made a totally open-ended offer of compensation for just about anything that happened to the rural industry in Queensland, but it never budgeted for it. It was never prepared to provide what it promised. The money was never there.

In relation to the leasehold tree-clearing guidelines, members opposite simply completed what the Goss Government, and particularly Mr Mackenroth and Mr Gibbs, started. All they did was to carry on the consultative process that the Goss Government had already put in place. Now Mr Cooper is moving a proposition to oppose any mandatory restrictions on tree clearing. The restrictions on the leasehold areas are mandatory under the Land Act as a result of the consultation process that was carried out. They carried on our consultation process and brought in mandatory guidelines. Are they now proposing that people who farm freehold land should not be subjected to the same guidelines as those on leasehold? Is the honourable member saying that he does not want any guidelines on freehold land? He is prepared to say that he will put impositions on people who farm leasehold land, but he does not want the same standards of land management to apply to people with freehold land.

This Government will provide fairness. We will engage in a consultative process with rural Queensland that will lead to guidelines for the protection of vegetation that will sustain the land in the long term for rural producers. This is not something that will be brought down from a Government on high; it will be done with rural producers to guarantee and underpin the long-term sustainability of pasture and range lands for rural producers. This is in rural producers' interests and the good performers, whether on leasehold land or freehold land, know it. The people of rural Queensland will

say that it is absurd that people on leasehold land should have certain standards and people on freehold land should have no standards.

The previous Government started a process. It had a task force to implement guidelines for tree clearing on freehold land, but it never did anything. Members opposite got nowhere with it. Their trouble is that they never achieved anything in Government. Let us look at the RFA: it had been going since 1977, but it never got anywhere. When we came into Government, it was not even started. The coalition Government had months and months of consultation—they went round and round the mulberry bush—but it achieved nothing. It just made a mess. Let us look at the water allocation management plan: for three long years they tortured the people in the Fitzroy, and where did they get to? Nowhere! After eight months in Government we have issued a draft and consulted the community. We will give them security of water supply. We will give them something that members opposite never gave them. In three years, members opposite just led them round and round the mulberry bush and delivered nothing. That is the record of the previous Government.

Time expired.