



Speech by

**Hon. R. WELFORD**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Hansard 24 March 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Vegetation Management**

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of an important step being taken by the Beattie Government to promote the sustainable management of native vegetation in Queensland. Our objective is a comprehensive system of vegetation management to achieve planning certainty for land-holders, industry and the community; the ecologically sustainable development of land; and the protection of our State's biodiversity.

In working towards a better approach to land management for the 21st century, this Government will provide fairness. There will be a clear, transparent and balanced process to guarantee sustainable development outcomes for the State and to satisfy the requirements of the Commonwealth Government, which it is determined to impose. I have recently appointed a new high-level vegetation management advisory committee to provide advice on strategies for native vegetation protection and sustainable management across Queensland. The committee, which meets today for the first time, will be chaired by Emeritus Professor John Holmes, formerly Professor of Geography at the University of Queensland and internationally recognised for his work on land use and land tenures. It will include key stakeholders—representatives from the Queensland Farmers Federation, the United Graziers Association, the Queensland Conservation Council, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Urban Development Institute of Australia and the Landcare and Catchment Management Council. These stakeholder groups have welcomed our action and given a commitment to work through issues constructively.

The Commonwealth has also commended the Beattie Government's action. The Honourable Senator Robert Hill, the Federal Minister for the Environment, stated—

"A legislated system of regional vegetation planning across all tenures, linked to clearing regulation would be a positive reform. I remain confident that, together with other trust outcomes, our Governments can deliver an historic improvement in the extent, condition and management of Australia's native vegetation."

I table that letter for the benefit of members.

Among other things it points out that, under the Natural Heritage Trust partnership agreement, Queensland's continued access to the millions of dollars of Natural Heritage Trust funding across our State is dependent on taking these important steps. The partnership agreement, which committed Queensland to develop an improved system of management across all land tenures to avoid unsustainable land clearing, was signed on 5 November 1997 by Messrs Borbidge, Hobbs and Littleproud. The previous Government established a vegetation management task force to develop clearing controls across all land tenures, both leasehold and freehold. However, this committee, which met for the first time on 28 November 1997, did nothing but continue uncertainty for our rural families and the environment. This was reflected by the Queensland Farmers Federation in its vegetation management issues paper of February 1998—

"Current ad hoc vegetation management controls and a lack of planning certainty are upsetting this balance and leading to unplanned clearing which might otherwise not have occurred."

That was from the vegetation management issues paper prepared by the Queensland Farmers Federation in 1998.

People living in rural and regional Queensland are looking for certainty. Global markets have given our commodities a tough time in the past decade, yet our rural producers have performed magnificently. This Government will engage in a consultative process that will lead to certainty; guidelines for the protection of vegetation that will sustain the land in the long term for rural producers. Any changes will have a sound scientific base. They will involve proper planning and advisory mechanisms, a duty of care for the environment, and be fair and equitable. Any changes will be developed in tandem with rural producers to guarantee and underpin the long-term sustainability of pasture and rangelands. There will be a partnership approach with urban development interests to promote best practice in the creation of truly sustainable living environments where new development occurs.

The Queensland Government's new vegetation management framework will build on the increasingly sound land management approaches of the vast majority of land-holders, property owners and developers. All members of this House should support these measures to promote the responsible retention of native vegetation to achieve sustainable land management into the 21st century.

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