



Speech by

**Hon. R. WELFORD**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Hansard 7 December 1999

### **TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES**

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (6.20 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Premier. In doing so, I want members to be absolutely clear about the motion that was moved by the Opposition. It is a pathetic, stalling tactic, a diversion, a denial of the real issue—an issue that the Opposition failed to deal with when it was in Government, an issue that it knew had to be dealt with and which it took on in a half-hearted way when Mr Borbidge, the then Premier, signed the NHT agreement with the Commonwealth. The former Premier made a commitment to reverse the net loss of vegetation across the State, but never delivered on his agreement. That is not the first time that the former Premier has done that.

The previous Government also finalised leasehold guidelines. This Government is proposing to implement a fair and consistent approach to the management of these issues across the State. Nothing can be fairer. What does the Opposition want? More delay, more uncertainty and another smokescreen. It comes up with excuses about something that the Premier said this week or an economic and social impact the next week. These are all just excuses for inaction. It is the same kind of inaction for which the Opposition members have become renowned in rural Queensland, which is why they were voted out and why One Nation won so many votes. The previous Government never delivered for rural Queensland. It never, ever gave them the certainty that they were looking for.

Yes, there has been some uncertainty and, yes, there has been some pre-emptive clearing. The Opposition is trying to blame the Government for that. This Government has consulted with rural industry, as it promised to do. We have delivered to rural industry in our State in exactly the way in which we said that we would. However, for two and a half years, the former Government ran them around in circles, led them up the garden path, delivered them no certainty and left the issue up in the air.

When the coalition was in Government for two and a half years, they fiddled. I am going to help out the members opposite. I am going to finish the job that the Opposition failed to get done. I am going to give rural industry the certainty that they deserve because, to this Government, rural industry is important. To this Government, rural industry is one of the biggest industries in our State. It stands alongside tourism, mining and manufacturing as one of the big industries of our State—industries that deserve planning certainty, industries that deserve to have applied across the State a fair and consistent regulatory regime, industries that deserve to have Government leadership and guidance to show them how they can achieve long-term economic security built on a foundation of environmental sustainability.

That is why all this year this Government has been working with rural industry. That is why this afternoon the Premier, the Minister for Local Government and I met with rural industry leaders. That is why last week and the week before the Minister for Local Government and I met with rural industry. Why? Not because we take them for granted, as do the Opposition, but because we take their concerns seriously. We want to get an outcome that is good for rural industry, good for the environment and good for the long-term future of land-based industries that depend ultimately for their survival on the sustainability and sound land management of the natural capital—the land resource on which rural industry is built.

There are two fundamental principles about our approach—principles that the Opposition never had the courage to take up. They are fairness and certainty—an openness and honesty with rural industry and the other stakeholders to work towards a solution that is fair and provides people with planning certainty. Yes, there will be some anxiety, and there has been some anxiety, as there is in any transition from one set of arrangements to a new set of arrangements. However, unlike the Opposition, this Government is going to finish the job. This Government is going to give a new set of arrangements that are fair, that demonstrate that we respond to the needs of rural industry, and arrangements that recognise that the long-term sustainability and economic security of that industry must be built on the sustainability of their natural capital—the sound management of their land upon which so many farmers are looking to the Government to give certainty.

The National Party are out of touch. That is why they take these knee-jerk, cynical, political cheap shots in motions such as this. That is why they lost the support of rural Queensland and bequeathed it to the One Nation Party. The Opposition never responded to the needs of their constituency by giving them the certainty that they deserve.

Time expired.

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