



Speech by

Hon. RUSSELL COOPER

MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST

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TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): It is perfectly obvious from listening to those opposite how little they know about tree clearing, the land, the nurturing of land and the love of the land. They have had no experience whatsoever and now they are trying to impose their views on land-holders who know better—people who have been on the land for generations who have nurtured the land through the love of the land knowing full well that they have to leave that land better than when they found it, otherwise they will wear the consequences. There is no question about that.

I am a case in point. As far as I am concerned, I had a green block at Wallumbilla in the 1960s. I have been there since 1963, for 36 years. I have cleaned that place up. It is park like. There is good timber and grass coverage. It is certainly going to be left better than when I found it. I am doing that voluntarily, not because I have been told by people like those opposite who are going to send tin Gods out there to tell me how to run my place and what I can do on my place. I know how it will finish up. Because of the very actions of those opposite now and later—if they ever get away with this—that love of the land will turn to hate. Then there will be problems. There is already a problem now with panic tree clearing going on. It did not start until those opposite started their interference.

Those opposite want to do it by compulsion, by legislation. Those opposite should watch the response they will get. It will be devastating. There has already been a rush of tree clearing going on now by people who would normally not do it. But they know those opposite are coming. They can see the inexperienced people opposite coming and they believe that Labor is going to make life as tough as possible. I want to give a warning here to the primary producer organisations: if they are going to be suckered in by those opposite to double cross their primary producer members, to walk away from them and sell them short, as they did with native title, then it will again be on their heads. We are going to stick up for every land-holder out there. The vast majority of them are people who want to nurture their land and make sure that they leave it better than when they found it. They are the ones that those opposite want to interfere with. We can take care of the few cowboys mentioned by those opposite.

Dr Clark: How? Tell us!

Mr COOPER: We can do it by example. We do not have to have legislation. The last thing they want is people like you telling them what to do, because you know not what you do. You do not know what you are doing. You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Crows Nest will address the Chair.

Mr COOPER: The people out there know a darned sight better than the member for Barron River. The Greens want it all their own way. That is perfectly obvious; we know that. They will take a little bit here and place a few controls there and, before we know where we are, just as happened with the RFA, they will have total control. That is the way the RFA is going; that is the way those opposite are going with tree clearing as well. As far as we are concerned, everyone can have faith in the land-holders out there who know their business. If we have faith in people and let them know that their judgment is trusted, people are more likely to live up to that than if we try to force legislation upon them. I know that that is the last thing the people out there want.

This Beattie Government has victimised primary producers. Instead of working with them, primary producers know very well that there is a tree-clearing agenda at work. All we want and all we will

support is a voluntary system and framework as well as a code of practice on vegetation matters. That is the sort of thing that the people can do themselves. They are very good at doing that themselves. If those opposite take that right away from them and force legislation upon them, then look out for the damage that that will cause to the vegetation in this State, and that will be on the heads of those opposite.

Freehold land is the most secure kind of tenure, and producers do pay a premium for that. They have their rights. The mishandling of this issue by the Beattie Government— because of the threat this Government is making to the way freehold land-holders handle their vegetation—has caused panic among. Similarly, land values will be forced down. Farmers need to be able to rotate the use of their land. They need to be able to cultivate.

I have just about reached the point where I have cleaned up my place. I know that if I leave it and walk away from it—or the Government has its way—the regrowth will take over. All the good work that has gone into making that a productive place, a place that I know I can be proud of, will be wasted. Most other primary producers feel the same. But if we let that country revert to its former condition, the land will be far worse because that is the way with regrowth. The land becomes so unproductive. Stock cannot be run any more. It cannot be made productive any more. Producers cannot pay their way any more. It is all because of people on the Government side of the House foisting laws upon people such as me—

Time expired.
