



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 sad that this debate on tree clearing has to take place, because all one hears from speakers opposite is their absolute ignorance of the topic. The fact is that they have had no experience whatsoever in issues related to tree clearing or the bush. The Government solves problems such as the RFA by bringing in the union heavies and making people sign so-called agreements that they cannot live with. The people now know that they cannot live with those agreements, which are starting to come unstuck. Members opposite keep saying that the RFA issue is solved, but it is not. The people are starting to see through the Government.

The Government is trying to con the farmers. It has used the Greens, Imogen Zethoven and Aila Keto. As far as the rural people are concerned, they are nothing but parasites. If anyone sticks up for the rural people, we do. We know the Government is trying to con them, just as it tried to con those involved in the RFA debate.

A Government member interjected.

Mr Springborg: Talk to them.

Mr COOPER: We talk to them, all right. I appeal to those opposite to get off the backs of the rural people. I appeal to the Government to leave them alone to manage their land as they have done very productively for the past 150 years. Their skills and managerial practices are based on experience, education and know-how. They are far more knowledgeable than anyone on the other side of the House. The Government should leave them alone and let them get on with it. The farmers have used fire for 150 to 200 years and the Aboriginals used it for 40,000 to 50,000 years before that, yet the Government is trying to tell them how to run their businesses and manage their land. That is absolutely beyond belief. The Government is creating anxiety for the people of the bush, who have had enough of the Government's constant interference. Now the Government wants to impose tree-clearing guidelines on freehold land, despite the fact that the owners of that land know how to manage it.

The Government will put in bureaucrats and tin gods to tell the people of the bush how to manage their land. We all know how those people operate. They will tell individual property owners how to run their places, but they have no experience whatsoever. The Government wants to impose rules and guidelines which are grossly unfair. That is an absolute slap in the face and an insult to those people and their experience.

I have personal experience of such issues. In 1960-61, I had a green block at Wallumbilla. Thirty-eight years later, that place is something of which I can be proud. It is absolutely parklike. The timber belts and the creeks are well looked after. It is a very productive place. That was achieved through hard work, know-how and experience. I learnt from the successes and failures of others. I am not alone in saying that. My neighbours and, indeed, people across the State have learnt how to manage the land in that way. Now, the Government is trying to impose rules on people who already know how to manage their land. They simply do not need or want the expertise of those on the other side of the House.

I wish the Premier would try to understand the damage that will be inflicted on the people of the bush through these impositions. They have had enough impositions. From 1990-91 onwards, they have been to hell and back through drought and collapses in commodity prices. Now the Government

wants to impose even more difficulties on them. This is the last thing they need. There are plenty of useful things that the Government could do, instead of making life harder for these people. They are productive and they know, as I know—I have done it—that we must leave the land better than when we found it. That is my job; the land was bequeathed to me on the understanding that I would not destroy it. If I did do that, that land would no longer be productive. I want that country to be productive. It would not be productive if I abused it. Ninety-nine per cent of people on the land understand and want that. That is why we are becoming better managers. We do not need to have legislation imposed on us. We have done without legislation in the past. Why does the Government suddenly want to impose legislation? That is for one reason only—to satisfy the Greens. The Government would have them interfere in the operations of productive people who simply do not need or want their so-called expertise. Most of it is based on scaremongering in the media and trumped up television programs—

Time expired.
