



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 24 August 1999

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.07 a.m.): I make a plea for the security of the jobs of those people who work in the timber towns. We have heard nothing constructive from this Government about how it will save jobs in the timber towns. All we have heard is the standard line: we are between a rock and a hard place. When asked how long the decision will take, they give the other favourite answer: the perennial "two weeks". That has been going on for months.

While the Beattie Government procrastinates on how long it is going to take to honour its pre-election promise to the extreme Greens, jobs and investment are left on ice. Instead of finalising the RFA agreement and restoring confidence to the timber industry, recently we saw the extraordinary spectacle of the Deputy Premier flying off to South Africa. Is it any wonder that people in the towns are so worried? While the Deputy Premier flew off to Africa, the extreme Greens launched yet another attack on the timber industry in the Labor Brisbane electorates.

I have a newsletter which calls on the Beattie Government to honour the promise it made twice—in 1995 and 1998—to close the native hardwood timber industry down. That is what we are dealing with. This document is from the extreme Greens, who want to close the timber industry down. This Government cannot make up its mind whether to do that or save jobs in the timber towns. The Government says that it is between a rock and a hard place, but its priority should be jobs, jobs and more jobs.

The Deputy Premier and leader of the AWU faction skipped town because he was scared of the mounting pressure within the Labor Party to ban logging. He was scared of being rolled again. The Deputy Premier has been rolled so many times, he is starting to resemble a cricket pitch.

Time expired.