



Speech by

## **Hon. V. LESTER**

### **MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Hansard 10 November 1999

#### **STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): The State of the Environment report released yesterday, which commenced under the Borbidge Government, provides a snapshot of Queensland's environment. Tragically, Queensland's ability to respond to that report has been stifled by the Beattie Government's massive cuts to the environmental budget.

In its 1999-2000 State Budget, the Beattie Government has slashed \$28.4m from the budgets of the Environmental Protection Agency and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. During the Estimates committee hearings, the Minister conceded that programs like the acid sulfate soil strategy and the Moreton Bay Marine Park management had not been provided with adequate funding. Spending in national parks has been slashed. Rangers are discouraged from working overtime, even in the event of bushfires, as unfortunately we have seen recently. Spending on pest control and weed control has been slashed. In national parks alone it has been slashed by \$120,000, despite the purchase of another 70,000 hectares of land and the planned addition of another 425,000 hectares under the Beattie Government's regional forest deal. A sum of \$5.5m was recouped from the EPA by Treasury for what was called "expenditure smoothing".

The State of the Environment report found issues that need attention. That requires the Government to work with industry and the community to address those problems. The Minister should not use the report against rural industries as he tries to do. The Beattie Government must put its money where its mouth is and restore funding to those important environmental programs. No amount of glossy documentation or political speak-ups can make up for the Beattie Government's massive environmental budget cuts. Quite frankly, this Government's effort on the environment is a thorough and utter disgrace.

Time expired.

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