



Speech by

## **Hon. V. LESTER**

### **MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Hansard 30 November 1999

#### **TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES**

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (6.10 p.m.): I have great pleasure in seconding this motion, which provides a breaking of the nexus that currently exists in this State as a result of the appalling manner in which the Beattie Labor Government has handled the issue of vegetation management. One would think that the Premier would recall the mess that the Goss Government created when it decided to introduce tree-clearing controls on leasehold land. One would think that Mr Beattie would remember the protests and the street march that took place outside the Cabinet meeting at Emerald. One would think that those opposite might have learnt from the way that the former coalition Government cleaned up the Goss mess and developed a practical vegetation management framework that had the support of industry and that resulted in sustainable levels of clearing of leasehold land. Sadly, the Beattie Government has not learned those lessons.

As my colleague the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, when the Borbidge Government left office, the issue of vegetation management on freehold land was being negotiated sensibly, coherently and scientifically in a genuine process of consultation with rural industry, local government and, indeed, other groups. However, since the change of Government, we have witnessed a gradual unravelling of that work. That has only been surpassed by the unravelling of the trust that Queensland land-holders initially may have had in the Beattie Government. Instead of seeing genuine negotiation and goodwill, we have witnessed one of the most scurrilous campaigns of misinformation and scaremongering against land-holders. The Government has made those people out to be crooks. It has not cared one bit about those people. A campaign was waged in the metropolitan media that was designed to victimise land-holders and allow the Beattie Government to drive its own agenda, irrespective of the needs and the rights of those land-holders. For goodness' sake! Those people produce our food and it is about time that members opposite woke up to that fact.

The trail of misinformation and scaremongering leads right to the office of the member for Everton, the current Minister for Natural Resources. His performance is topped only by the compliance of the Beattie Government with the uncompromising, unjustified and scientifically baseless demands of certain elements of the Green movement. Added to that are various stunts of the Premier such as his weekend ransom demand. It is no wonder that so-called panic clearing has happened.

This motion sets about providing a positive and practical alternative to the manner in which the Beattie Government is handling a difficult issue. Indeed, the Government cannot handle the issue, even though we have told it how to do so. The motion recognises the rights that are attached to freehold land. People pay extra money for freehold land and they deserve some rights. People who own freehold land look after it, because they know they have to. It is the most secure tenure available. The motion recognises the fact that freehold land-holders have paid a premium for their land because of the ownership rights and security of tenure that it confers. It recognises that freehold land-holders have a right to manage their land as they see fit.

The motion also recognises that everybody has a responsibility to manage their land sustainably. It recognises that, because of the Beattie Government's handling of the issue, there has been an increase in so-called panic clearing. It recognises that, given the rights conferred with freehold title, if the Government or the community wish to impose certain conditions or restrictions on the use of that land, the land-holder is entitled to some form of compensation. Importantly, it recognises that land-

holders are focused on managing their land sustainably and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, are doing so.

The approach of the Beattie Government to the issue of freehold vegetation management is not working and it will not work. If the Beattie Government is serious about addressing the issue of tree clearing on freehold land, it should support this motion very strongly. The motion restores goodwill and commonsense to the vegetation management debate. It provides an opportunity for the State to work with land-holders to achieve a sensible, scientifically based practical framework for vegetation management on freehold land. In view of what is happening, I call on all members to support this motion.

Time expired.

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