



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 7 December 1999

TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.04 a.m.): Reports today in the Sydney Morning Herald and the Melbourne Age have exposed the furphy being peddled by the Premier yesterday and again this morning in the Queensland media outlets that he is still trying to negotiate an agreement on tree-clearing controls for freehold land. The Premier has no intention of trying to secure genuine agreement. During the entire debate he has held a gun to the heads of rural industry organisations and he has tried to force primary producers to compromise and to accept the radical demands of an extreme agenda which has no interest in jobs, rural communities or economic development.

Those newspaper reports refer to confirmation by Government sources that Cabinet has already agreed to new legislation on controlling clearing. A balanced decision cannot be made. Cabinet has made up its mind. Yesterday's scurrilous claims by the Premier linking seasonal burn-offs with tree clearing were yet another attack by this malicious Labor Government in its campaign of victimisation against primary producers and were a deliberate ploy to pave the way for the new laws.

Those reports also claim that the Beattie Government will introduce legislation this week. They claim that Standing Orders will be suspended so that the Government can force through unprecedented assaults on property rights. That would be a scurrilous abuse of this Parliament and proper procedure. It would confirm beyond all doubt that this Government, despite its dripping rhetoric, is not open and accountable. I warn the Premier not to treat this Parliament, primary producers and other stakeholders with contempt by forcing through legislation this week. It is time for the Premier to apologise on behalf of the Government for his disgraceful treatment of rural industry. It is time the Beattie Government gave some priority to jobs and rural communities and based decisions on science instead of TV footage and emotive scaremongering.
