



Speech by

## Hon. V. LESTER

### MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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Hansard 7 December 1999

#### TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (6.10 p.m.): In seconding this motion, I am calling upon the Government to stop its purge of the bush, to stop using the bush as a scapegoat and to buy votes in the city and to stop using the media to try and hype up some sort of feeling that we in the bush act like criminals.

**A Government member** interjected.

**Mr LESTER:** That is what The Government is trying to do; it is trying to make us look like criminals. I will tell Government members now, we are not going to cop it one minute longer.

Look at the muck-up that those opposite have made in the bush in recent times. The regional forest agreement is now a can of worms. If those opposite do not believe me, they should go to the Gympie area and talk to representatives of local government. This Government is trying to shut down music tuition in the bush. Goodness me, what does this Government think it is coming at.

This Government is going to impose tree-clearing guidelines on freehold land. It does not care how it will be done and it does not care what hurt it will inflict on bush people. This is the philosophy of the Labor Party. I simply say to those opposite: to legislate land-clearing guidelines on freehold land, or to have a moratorium, is a treacherous thing to do. It is ill-researched, it is irresponsible, it is destabilising and it is property devaluing. It offers a bucketload of uncertainty. This Government is guilty of a breach of trust. It is guilty of betrayal of the bush.

An owner has to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to freehold a property. The people who pay that sort of money are responsible. They want their land to continue to be productive. They want their land to increase in value. These days, farmers and graziers study and practise the best management practices possible. To impose land-clearing guidelines and restrictions on freehold land not only devalues properties but restricts incentive and stops people from moving into new technology and developments that are so essential to allowing farmers to compete and sell their products, not only in the domestic market in competition against imports, but also on world markets.

Because the owner of a property will no longer be the boss, it will be the Government that dictates how a property will be run. That is why properties will be so very badly devalued. If this scurrilous activity goes ahead, property owners will be subservient to a band of public servants who will come on to their properties without notice. These public servants will invade properties like white ants and will issue on-the-spot fines and impose court action on property owners who they merely think have crossed over some of the guidelines.

If those opposite do not believe me, I suggest they look at some of the agricultural developments in north Queensland. These developments have been put on hold and clearing has been halted because it has simply been suggested that perhaps mahogany gliders might live on the properties. There is no proof of this, but the property owners' futures and their bank overdrafts have gone into oblivion. What about property owners who have been made—

**Mrs Edmond:** I wish my bank overdraft would go into oblivion.

**Mr LESTER:** Come on! The Minister would not know what she is talking about; she cannot even look after hospitals in the bush. Who the heck is she to start interjecting?

Let us consider Mr Beattie when he was some 40,000 feet in the air and looking at what was going on. The Premier thought he was seeing cleared trees being burnt. I have had many phone calls today from surveyors who are angry and bewildered. Does Mr Beattie not know that the properties he flew over on his way from Charters Towers to Brisbane—properties such as Yacamunda, Bulliwah and Scartwater—are pastoral holdings. Indeed, some of those properties are leasehold; they are not freehold properties at all. The people involved were burning off dead grass in anticipation of the summer rains so that new grass could grow and provide better feed for cattle. That is what running a property is all about. I ought to know because I baked bread for those people.

I can assure the Premier that those people are very upset about what is occurring. They are also upset at the Government's lack of feeling. I simply say to the Premier that this Government—

Time expired.

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