



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 28 April 1999

PERFORMANCE OF MINISTERS

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (6.05 p.m.): I second this motion with great relish. In less than 12 months the Beattie Government has managed to achieve what took the Goss Government some two terms. The Beattie Government has been long on rhetoric but its Ministers have been short on action. Its members promised to consult, but they do not listen, and only today I hear from the area of the tablelands that there are enormous valuation problems. Some valuations are up 600%, and the Minister will not meet with the people there. This Government promised to be open and inclusive, but its policies are developed behind closed doors. A number of committee chairmen, whose role it is to advise the Minister, have advised me that policies come on line and they have not even been consulted. The members opposite promised to be a Government for all Queenslanders, but the deals are done with the faction leaders, and industries and jobs are traded off for preference votes. Shame! They promised to not increase taxes and charges above the CPI, but they have done so, anyway. They promised to be a can-do Government, but the only thing they have demonstrated they can do is break their promises.

This Government, through the incompetence of its Ministers, its aloof and arrogant administration and its out-of-touch policies, has managed to galvanise Queenslanders in rural industries in a way that I have never seen before. Leading the charge has been the member for Everton, the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources, who leaves a path of destruction around Queensland wherever he goes. Without one skerrick of proof he attacks graziers with ludicrous allegations that they are breeding dingoes for profit. While pests and weeds flourish in underfunded and understaffed national parks, departmental resources are instead dedicated towards buying more national parks and appointing another 60 Brisbane-based bureaucrats. National parks should be maintained before other parks are bought.

So catastrophic is the Government's administration of issues that are so crucial to the prosperity and future of our rural industries that I am afraid that this Minister will surely go down as the worst Minister for Environment and Minister for Natural Resources in the annals of the Queensland parliamentary history. Is there anything wrong with rural people making a profit? If they make a profit, they spend their money, and that is very, very important.

The Beattie Government has repeatedly claimed that it has not frozen capital works since coming into office, but we have seen a mammoth freeze of a most exciting capital works program—the \$1 billion water infrastructure program—a freeze of ice age proportions. Let us look at the check list: the St Helens Creek dam, axed; the Nathan dam, approval revoked, final decision delayed; the Finch Hatton dam, axed; the raising of the Walla Weir, delayed; the Paradise dam, no decision; the Cooranga Weir, delayed; and the Flinders dam, axed unceremoniously without telling any members of the council. What a sad, can't do record! Still on water, the Minister for Natural Resources refuses to guarantee fair compensation for those irrigators who will lose water security as a result of the water allocation management planning process.

Despite the Minister's claims, his approach is fair. I am yet to hear of one farm organisation or one solitary irrigator who agrees with him. The condemnation has been resounding. To see this we need only look at Country Life. On two occasions the Minister has been belted in the editorial.

The Minister also turned his attention to the Queensland forest industry, again armed with the so-called Labor transition policy, hatched by the Socialist Left and the extreme green agenda. We know what has happened there.

Mr Swarten: Extreme green agenda!

Mr LESTER: That is what it has been. It is an agenda that will not help anybody. That is the truth. He has been advised by the greenies. It is not helping anybody. It is not helping the job situation. It is a pretty poor record. Indeed, under the previous Government there was a good spirit of cooperation that was widely acknowledged. Things were working very well.

Time expired.
