



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (6.10 p.m.): Basically, tonight the Opposition is here to yet again reiterate that we need from this Parliament the continuation of a viable and sustainable timber industry that is based on the native forest hardwood resource with a gradual transition to hardwood plantations as they become available. We want the retention of all existing jobs, enhanced silviculture practices and value adding. We want to ensure a scientifically justifiable, comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserve system and the continued access to forest reserves by other associated industries and community groups.

Mr Purcell: Put a bit of heart into it.

Mr LESTER: It is okay for the member opposite to say, "Put a bit of heart into it", but I am stating very clearly in the Parliament some of the basic reasons why those 3,500 people were outside today in a very orderly demonstration. They are worried. That is why they were there. Those people from some 44 towns do not want to see their jobs go. Why would they be worried? Because under the very best option, possibly 600 jobs would be lost! That is raw timberworkers' jobs, not the add-on effect. The worst scenario could be that 1,100 jobs will go. That is the reason they were here. However, they were not a rabble. They were a very decent, well-organised group who marched by the correct processes and conducted their demonstration in a most sensible way. I did not hear one bit of yahoing or anything else. They had the Webb Brothers band to give a bit of entertainment, but when one listened to the speakers and to those people who were affected, we could see their quivering concern. If they do not have their timberworker jobs, it is very, very clear that they may not have any job at all.

That is why I am saying to the Parliament tonight that this is a serious issue. I call upon everybody here to work together to make sure that we can come up with a realistic deal not unlike the Western Australian agreement where, indeed, no jobs were lost. I firmly believe that we can use "no jobs lost" as a base with which to start. I really believe that we can do that and go from there. As I said before, with proper value adding, proper sustainability and being careful in the future, we can grow those jobs, as the timber industry itself has suggested, in an environmentally friendly way by up to 600 jobs.

Not so long ago, I also attended another rally at the Rocklea showgrounds. That rally was attended by rally drivers, horse riders, four-wheel-drive vehicle owners, bicyclists and hikers—people concerned about their recreational areas. The environmentalists and health fanatics tell us how important it is to make sure that recreation is used to the hilt. Yet we are concerned that some of these recreational areas might be taken away. I would agree that, on that particular day, the Minister indicated that there may be some form of land title or whatever by which these people can still continue with their activities. However, he certainly did not guarantee that jobs would not be lost in the timber industry. Although I believe that it would be fair to say that on that occasion he tried quite hard, there was a speech for them and a different speech for others who may have been listening. I hope that I am wrong in that, and I could well be wrong. It would be good if I am. However, when one says that there will be certain areas set aside under perhaps a different form of title, I wonder whether we have given in before we start.

Before I finish, I have to say that we should not try to go down the middle of the road and appease the Greens and everybody else. We have the timberworkers there. They can do the job properly. We can have no jobs lost. We can grow the timber industry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): The honourable member for Keppel's time has expired. I take it that he is seconding the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition?

Mr LESTER: Very much so.

Time expired.
