



Speech by

**BILL FELDMAN**

**MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE**

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Hansard 19 July 2000

### **DIESEL REBATE SCHEME**

**Mr FELDMAN** (Caboolture—CCAQ) (6.05 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to second the motion moved by the honourable member for Gladstone that this House calls on the Federal Government to review the diesel fuel rebate scheme in Queensland for off-road diesel users to ensure their fuel input costs do not rise in spite of the Intergovernmental Agreement. I thank the member for Gladstone for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

In this State we now have the highly inequitable situation in which some categories of off-road diesel users are paying up to 10c per litre more than on-road users for their diesel fuel. The civil construction industry builds and maintains Australia's infrastructure: roads, rail, harbours, airports, water, sewerage, gas, power, telecommunications hardware and water storage systems. As I am sure all members would agree, these are all very worthwhile and necessary endeavours to maintain and improve our standard of living. Why then, I ask, are these hardworking people who contribute so much to our way of life being squeezed in the nutcracker grip of the Intergovernmental Agreement?

For some reason this Government has agreed to remove Queensland's off-road diesel consumer scheme in favour of the Commonwealth assuming responsibility—and I use those words loosely—for the users of off-road diesel from 1 July 2000. The Government's Office of State Revenue stated in its information bulletin, "From this time the Commonwealth is responsible for ensuring that off-road diesel users are no worse off as a result of these changes." They are nice words. They are even reassuring words, except for the fact that they come from a Government spin doctor intent on shifting blame to anywhere but where it belongs.

I am sure the Premier would love to be able to count the cranes on Brisbane's skyline and find the numbers similar to those that existed in Joh's era. I tend to agree with him that they are a good indicator of growth and development. Even if this Government was providing an environment conducive to economic development, this attack on the construction and extractive industries would impose a real braking effect. It is all very well to listen to the inane rantings of the Democrats, who have found a new and unrealistic environmental conscience, but without these industries, there would be no roads, there would be no highways and there would be no concrete, which is an integral part of virtually all forms of construction from homes to skyscrapers. The extractive and construction industries play a vital role in providing the jobs, jobs, jobs that Mr Beattie is floundering about looking for and unable to find.

In my electorate I actually have two very well performing extractive industries: Bracalba Quarries, headed by Ernie Alzino, and also Southern Pacific Sands down at Bestman Road at Ningi, headed by Ian Harrison. Both of them rang me very distraught when this change occurred. Both businesses wind up losing because they have no on-road component to balance what they lose from the off-road component. They lose, and they lose big time. They lose somewhere in the vicinity of 2c a litre. That might not seem like much, but both these industries use something in the vicinity of one million litres of diesel fuel a year. So these industries are going to wind up losing in the vicinity of \$55,000 to \$85,000 a year. That is jobs lost from my electorate that will not be able to be regained. That is jobs lost for the people up there. It is just not good enough to say, "That is tough."

These industries provide vital employment. There are 50 people employed at Alzino's quarry and 10 subcontractors, each supporting some two or three transport companies as well as all the flow-on industries. I just cannot see what this Government would gain out of doing what it has done to extractive industries. These punitive measures against selected industries mean more and more

unemployment. Surely it is time that this Government woke up to what everybody in the real world already knows, that is, that it is 10 times easier to keep an existing job than to set about creating new ones on the wasteland of broken industries. That is exactly what will happen.

I also have letters here from Park Forge about the diesel rebate scheme. It is an environmental landscape and engineering contractor in Wamuran, again in my electorate. That is another industry that is suffering and will not be able to write off on-road against off-road. It is suffering because the gain will turn into a loss.

Time expired.

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