



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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TREE-CLEARING GUIDELINES

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (6.09 p.m.): Is it any wonder we have had such demonstrations as happened in Winton and are going to happen again in Roma in the not too distant future! It is because the tree-clearing legislation was not treated in this Parliament with the true respect that it was due. One thing bush people have is respect for authority and respect for one another. But they were not given respect in this Parliament. The tree-clearing legislation was virtually guillotined well before it started, and it was guillotined because some held the point of view that the Bill presented to the Parliament was structurally unsound. It has not been able to work. It was not worked out properly with the relevant stakeholders. As a result, we are seeing one of the worst debacles I have ever seen.

The Beattie laws attack the right of primary producers to manage their freehold properties. It must be remembered that graziers and land-holders have paid a lot of additional money to freehold their land. When they will pass that land on to their families for generations to come, do those opposite think they are going to allow that land to be degraded? Do those opposite think they are going to mess their land up? Of course they are not. No way in the world! They are going to look after their land, yet this Government brings in the tree-clearing laws. I really believe it is all about politics. That is why the Government has done it. It has not cared about the people in the bush who contribute so much in order to feed the people in the cities.

This situation has been brought about in an effort to appease an agreement the Government made with the Greens. That is what this is all about. The Government has probably worked it out that, no matter what it does, many of the seats affected in the bush will not vote for the Labor Party anyway. The Labor Party is going to run Queensland on a political basis. That is very wrong. Our trust in this Government is going to suffer in a very bad way. It must be remembered that land-holders are willing to work with the Government and develop a sensible tree-clearing policy. They have already indicated that. Yet, the Beattie-Welford Government has not bothered even to pay lip service to them on this issue. The Government met with them and that is about where it was left.

The Government has set arbitrary figures and restrictions that cannot be justified scientifically. Labor members are laughing about what is happening to people in the bush. It is either that or they are having a private joke of their own. I am not sure which it is, but that is probably what they are doing—having a private joke of their own when we are discussing these issues that are so important for people in the bush. That is really what it is about. These laws rely on the big stick rather than the carrot. That is what it is all about. They are based on the false assumption that freehold land-holders want to degrade their land. They are based on the assumption that the Government knows best. This Government knows best about the bush! They do not even listen to the people in the bush. That is what it is about.

I believe the Beattie Government should look at its own land management record. Let us look at the absolutely dreadful record of the Government managing Crown land. Look at some of the national parks. The Government has made a big issue in this place about buying a national park, but then it has gone away and forgotten all about it. What has happened? It has allowed parthenium weed, rat's tail grass and feral animals into these parks in abundance. That is what it is about. The Government does not even look after its own parks. It does not know how to, yet it expects that graziers who have paid extra money for their land will let it degrade. No way in the world! The Government does not care about the people. It does not even want to set an example.

If the Government wants to do the right thing, it would carry out an audit of the management of national parks to make sure there are sufficient people to look after them. Believe it or not, but \$6,500 per annum is all that is budgeted to look after Hellhole National Park near Adavale. How do those opposite think the people on properties near that park are coping with feral animals, weeds and every other thing coming from this most magnificent park—or what would be a magnificent park if it were looked after?

Time expired.
