



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): It seriously saddens me to sit in this parliament tonight to listen to this debate about the Vegetation Management Act once again when so many speakers obviously do not understand the issues or the legislation. We have heard contributions tonight from both sides of the House from people who are totally confused, totally mixed up and who do not understand this legislation. That is because of the way in which this legislation was forced through the House by the ideologically-driven previous minister who made no attempt to introduce workable legislation but introduced legislation which was ideologically driven and which, and I say this quite genuinely, has left the current minister with a huge job to make it work. The current minister has a huge job.

The confusion in the House tonight reflects the confusion in the general community. It reflects the confusion by not only land-holders but also officers within the department who are responsible for making this legislation workable. They are just as confused as members of this House as to what this legislation involves and what this legislation requires of land-holders. I am not going to debate the legislation tonight. I have spoken a sufficient number of times in this House to place on the record my thoughts about the Vegetation Management Act. Given the result of the state election, the government has the mandate. The minister's responsibility is to make the legislation workable. The member for Nanango moved this motion tonight. The National Party supports the motion, particularly parts (2) and (3), which are the basic tenets of the arguments we have put in relation to the Vegetation Management Act right from the very beginning. We have argued that land-holders have to be paid compensation for loss of revenue.

Mr Robertson: That's our argument, too.

Mr SEENEY: The government should put some money in. I am sorry I have only five minutes to speak in the debate tonight, because I would like to deal in detail with the comments the minister made about the money that the state government has made available to this process. In short, the facts of the matter are that the state government has not paid one dollar in compensation. It has not addressed the compensation issue. The figure of \$111 million that the minister uses relates to the departmental budget costs involved. Absolutely nothing has been contributed towards the core issue of compensation. However, time does not allow me to explore that fully.

The minister and the member for Burnett are right when they say that the commercial sale of timber is allowable under the Vegetation Management Act. It clearly is. The problem is that the minister's officers and the community do not know that. The problem is that land-holders are confused about it. That confusion gives rise to land-holders coming into my electorate office and the electorate office of the member for Nanango feeling anger, frustration and contempt for the vegetation management legislation. That is the problem. That is the reason this motion has been moved tonight. The departmental officers are confused and, in turn, people are confused. They get angry and then go and see their local member. Anybody who does not have an intimate knowledge of the legislation does not know what the situation is.

That is the challenge for the minister, that is, to make sure in the first place that his department is administering the legislation properly, and it simply is not at the moment. It does not understand it.

Different people are giving different advice. I can bring to the attention of this parliament any number of examples of that.

However, the bottom line is that we will support the member for Nanango's motion because of parts (2) and (3). We cannot support the government's amendment, simply because it talks about the success of this legislation. This legislation has not succeeded, because it has not been accepted by the land-holding community. It has not been properly administered by the department, because the department itself does not understand it. It was introduced by a minister who demonised the land-holders of Queensland and made no attempt to make a reasonable approach to the federal government for the compensation that they deserve.

Time expired.
