



Speech by

Hon. S. ROBERTSON

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard 2 May 2001

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines)
(6.14 p.m.): I move—

Omit all words after 'recognise' and insert the following—

'the success of Queensland's vegetation management legislation in maintaining biodiversity and preserving the environmental and economic sustainability of the State;

and further,

condemns Federal Government attempts to interfere in, and ride roughshod over, Queensland's management of its natural resources, including vegetation.'

The Beattie Labor government recognises the need to conserve areas of vegetation, to maintain biodiversity and to preserve the environmental and economic sustainability of the state for future generations. Fundamental to that recognition is a commitment to protect Queensland's native vegetation. That is why last year this government introduced the most comprehensive vegetation management controls Queensland has ever had on both freehold and leasehold land.

The Vegetation Management Act was developed following extensive consultation with all stakeholders, including rural industries, conservation groups, the urban development industry, rural communities, local government and government agencies. This broad community involvement is ongoing through the establishment of 20 regional vegetation management committees throughout the state. This process gives local communities direct involvement in developing voluntary vegetation management arrangements that are best suited to their own regions.

The Queensland government has already made a significant investment of some \$111 million into Queensland's vegetation management. This funding is being used to promote good, economically sustainable vegetation management practices, to provide support to land-holders through extension services, and landscape planning and assessment.

Already we are seeing tangible benefits from the new vegetation management regimen. In the six months since the enactment of the Vegetation Management Act, Queensland has achieved a significant reduction in the number of approvals for land clearing. In the period from 1 September 2000 to 28 February 2001, my department issued 115 permits for clearing of remnant vegetation with a total area of 70,800 hectares. This compares with data showing that some 424,000 hectares had been cleared over the previous 12 months. This result is proof positive that Queensland's vegetation management controls are working and are effective.

The honourable member, in moving her original motion, claimed that the Vegetation Management Act has a negative impact on land-holders who have invested in timber as a revenue source. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Queensland government acknowledges some land-holders' use of timber as an important revenue source. In recognition of this, sustainable timber harvesting is allowed under the Vegetation Management Act—an act that enjoys the support of none other than the Queensland Timber Board.

As I said, Queensland's vegetation management controls are working and are proving to be effective. If there is one source of frustration—and the member for Nanango should take notice of this—to all stakeholders involved in the vegetation management debate, it is the lack of support from

the federal coalition government. As I said earlier, we have invested some \$111 million in relation to vegetation management planning throughout this state. What is missing is the necessary compensation, particularly for freeholders of land. Once that area of endangered and of concern ecosystems on their land is identified, we can then go out there, through our Department of Natural Resources officers, and enter into real suggestions with those land-holders about how to protect that land and compensate them for it.

Mr Seeney: How much have you given by way of compensation?

Mr ROBERTSON: We have spent \$111 million so far. What we want from the federal government is for them to top that up with some \$103 million. Despite all the promises of the federal coalition government—and we have seen the result of Senator Hill's performance—not one dollar has come from the federal government to compensate land-holders.

Mr Seeney: Not one dollar from you, either.

Mr ROBERTSON: As I said, there has been \$111 million from us; there has been nothing from the federal government.

I say to the member for Nanango that, until the federal government comes clean and shows us the money, the frustration of her constituents is going to continue. They have my sympathy, I can assure her of that. She needs to get on to people like my friend the member for Callide to go to his National Party colleagues and the federal Liberal Minister for Environment in Canberra and tell them to show Queensland the money, to come back here with a \$103 million cheque that allows us to compensate land-holders for the controls that we have put in place. I assure the member that if it had not been for our controls, the federal government would have come in over the top of us, anyway, and her constituents would have been in a much worse position than they are currently.
