



Speech by

# TREVOR STRONG

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

---

Hansard 2 May 2001

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

**Mr STRONG** (Burnett—ALP) (6.29 p.m.): I find it surprising that the original motion should ever have come before this parliament. I will explain to members how the legislation operates with respect to farm forestry and some of the other initiatives of this government in encouraging timber production on private lands, particularly in my own electorate of Burnett, in the area of Miriam Vale, which is a thriving timber plantation part of the world.

The Vegetation Management Act was introduced to allow for the control of indiscriminate land clearing across Queensland. I have talked to farmers, land clearers and other people in my electorate, but not one of them could deny the fact that something had to happen. In fact, a very large number of rural land managers already exceed the standards set under the legislation and, without any prompting or financial support from the government, have adopted balanced and sustainable land management practices on their properties.

The Beattie government is also committed to promoting sustained timber production on private land. When the Vegetation Management Act was drafted, the definition of 'clearing' was written to expressly exclude 'forestry practices'. This means that no approvals are required for activities that are included as 'forest practices'. Under the act, 'forest practices' include growing and harvesting trees in a plantation, and harvesting and management of native forests in a way that allows the forests to regenerate to their natural condition. The legislation stipulates that these activities must be part of an ongoing forestry business. This is a business that is planning to make recurring income from harvesting trees over a long period.

Land-holders seeking eligibility for the forest practices exemption must also ensure that they protect their land from degradation in the form of erosion, rising water tables, salinity and damage to streams. For example, trees should be planted in a contour formation over hilly country rather than in straight lines. These provisions ensure that only those land-holders who are genuinely committed to sustainable farm forestry are eligible for an exemption from the normal approval process.

I am advised that this approach has the strong support of the Queensland Timber Board. I understand that its representatives met with the Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for Mines last week and reaffirmed their commitment. Hundreds of land-holders across the state are sustainably managing and harvesting their forests under the arrangements that the Beattie government has now put in place. These land-holders can rest assured that their commitment and foresight in contributing to ongoing, long-term timber supplies is recognised and they can continue unimpeded. If honourable members talk to the sleeper cutters in my area they will hear them say that they have no problems. Since the act has come into force they have seen no difference in their normal run of business.

It is important to know that the Beattie government is not resting on its laurels when it comes to farm forestry and that there are a range of activities designed to support and assist growers. Three main Beattie government initiatives in this area are the development of the Queensland forest practices system, the ongoing implementation of the landmark South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement and the facilitation of carbon credits for forestry.

Another major initiative of the Beattie government, which is part of the South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement, is the funding of the establishment of 5,000 hectares of hardwood plantations, much of which will be on private land. Every major player of the hardwood plantation

industry currently doing business in Australia will be in the Miriam Vale area in my electorate within 18 months. In approximately five years' time they will actually run out of land. In my particular electorate it is a growth industry.

These core plantations and the renewed interest in commercial plantations by forestry investment companies also have positive flow-on effects to the farm forestry sector in Queensland. Benefits include greater awareness and understanding of forestry as a viable and sustainable land use, the availability of a more skilled and enduring work force and the development of the critical mass of plantations to attract the interests of the processing sector. There are now in excess of 20,000 hectares of hardwood plantations in Queensland, most of which are on private land. This is more than double what was planted in 1995, and plantations will continue to grow as Queensland continues to attract local, interstate and overseas forestry companies to invest in growing commercial plantations.

Time expired.

---