



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard 26 November 2002

NATIVE TIMBER FORESTS

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.37 p.m.): I rise to speak about a letter that I received from a constituent congratulating Department of Primary Industries staff on workshops on how to sustainably manage and harvest native timber forests. The constituent, whose family has been milling timber in the South Burnett for the past 80-odd years, said—

I have found these field days absolutely wonderful. I think that the transfer of this information from these experts to the land holder is essential to ensure that we can sustainably manage these reserves and ensure the viability of the timber industry in our region.

My constituent referred in particular to DPI officer Sean Ryan and his team but queried whether further funding had been put aside for Mr Ryan and his team to continue their workshops. In light of the comments made, I urge the minister to look more closely at the issue as the implementation of the RFA has caused considerable concern for landowners. If the DPI can promote the advantages of managing timber reserves in a way that reaches the very people who rely on timber harvesting, I can only acknowledge the efforts of the minister and the DPI staff.

Although the RFA process effectively halved the state forest production area in south-east Queensland with a guarantee of access to an annual harvest until 2024, the information on developing hardwood plantations as a substitute after that time is essential. A lot of farmers are unsure of the advantages of establishing hardwood timber plantations, especially plantation development of non-domesticated species, which is considered to be a high-risk venture. The current knowledge of the likely wood quality or quantity produced in the nominated 25-year rotation length is scarce enough according to industry sources.

My main concern, and the reason why I ask the minister to ensure ongoing education, is that industry figures show that there is a trend indicating a reduced volume available from private resources. I am quoting from the joint paper put out by staff from the Queensland Forestry Research Institute, Gympie, and the Mary Valley Sunshine Coast Farm Forestry Association. Industry sources claim that one reason for the decline is the lack of good silviculture management that is evident in many private forests. It states that high percentages of the standing timber are either suppressed or damaged from past logging operations, causing a progressive decline in the productivity and value of the resource.

The paper calls for discussion on the history of private native forest management, the current condition of these forests, and the processes—both physical management and those involving information exchange—needed to bring them back into productivity. The paper also calls it naive to believe the notion of replacing private native forest timber production solely with plantation grown hardwoods.

The paper discusses at length the problems mentioned above and it appears that DPI Forestry has at least addressed the growing importance to land-holders of the future of private forests and their property management. I call on the minister to ensure that education funding to ensure the sustainability of this resource and income for private landowners is continued. I would be happy to supply the minister with the paper in full. I hope that he continues to support his staff in addressing an issue that has been a very important issue for land-holders, especially in the south-east Queensland region.