



Speech by

Mike Horan

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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FORESTRY PLANTATIONS QUEENSLAND BILL

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (2.45 pm): This is a very important, historic bill. I say it is historic because it will bring about a very significant change to the way in which forestry is operated in Queensland. For generations we have had a forestry department within Queensland DPI. At times it has been a stand-alone department. This bill creates a corporation that will be the commercial manager of state owned plantations.

It is also worth noting that tacked on to the end of this bill are some matters relating to the parliamentary superannuation scheme and clarification as to whether or not members of parliament can receive one additional salary only.

Since the beginning of European settlement, and especially in many regional areas, the Queensland forest industry has played a vital role in Queensland life. If members look at the lists of forestry plantations, native forests and forestry offices throughout the state they would realise that the forest industry is one of the most decentralised industries. Importantly, it has been a magnificent industry for the many communities throughout the state that know and understand timber. Many families involved in the timber industry have been involved in that industry for generations. They understand the forests, they understand the bush, they understand the ways of maintaining our forests as sustainable forest industries, because those people inherited that knowledge from their families and they are passing on their knowledge and understanding of our forests to the generations that follow them. Today throughout Queensland, particularly in terms of western hardwoods, much of that corporate knowledge and family knowledge is being wrecked.

Queensland has a total forest estate of about 56 million hectares. Queensland has the largest forested areas of all the states of Australia. About 80 per cent of Queensland's forests are publicly owned. The forest industry comprises 2,200 businesses. It employs directly more than 19,000 people and has a turnover of \$2.7 billion. The forest industry also generates a number of environmental benefits for the community through the retention or establishment of forests for the production of commercial forest products. These benefits may include reduced soil salinity levels, improved water quality of streams and rivers and increased biodiversity.

Obviously, the government plays a key role in setting the regulatory framework for the forest industry as well as overseeing the management and establishment of state owned forest resources. Currently, DPI Forestry, which operates as a commercial business unit within the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, is the state's principal forest grower. Throughout that time DPI Forestry has been managing the state owned production forests, that is, plantations and native forests. DPI Forestry's plantation estates cover more than 190,000 hectares—nearly 90 per cent of Queensland's total plantation estate—with the majority of these plantations in south-east Queensland located in the Beerburum to Maryborough area. There are also plantation estates throughout central Queensland in the Byfield area and in north Queensland in areas such as Cardwell, Tully and a little further inland towards the tablelands.

DPI Forestry has paid an estimated \$182 million in dividends to the Queensland government since it became a commercial business unit in 1995, with the dividend of \$8.6 million payable to the government in 2005-06. In July 2004 the state government nominated DPI Forestry as a candidate of a government

owned corporation of Queensland Treasury to head a committee of senior officers to undertake a public benefit test and prepare a draft corporatisation charter. The government has stated that the reason behind this change and this investigation is to improve the competitiveness of the timber plantation industry by ensuring the state owned supplier has a more commercial structure.

In the briefing I received from departmental officials—and I thank them for their courtesy, their knowledge and detail—it was stated that while DPI Forestry has been a commercial business unit for a decade it is still tied to many public service requirements and is still very bureaucratic. That has limited its capacity to meet industry demands. I understand there was a stakeholder reference group formed to discuss the proposed corporatisation of DPI Forestry. That group included the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, the Plywood Association, the Queensland Beekeepers Association, Timber Queensland, Cedar Hill Flowers and Foliage and the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation. In October last year the Premier stated that the government did not intend to pursue a corporatisation agenda for DPI Forestry at this time. However, he stated that the government would implement a commercial reform framework and ensure that DPI Forestry staff continue to be employed under the same state legislation and under the same terms and conditions.

The bill we are debating here today establishes Forestry Plantations Queensland, or FPQ, as a corporation sole as opposed to a government owned corporation. In this regard, it is virtually the same as the corporation sole that was put in place for the Australian agricultural colleges which covered the agricultural colleges at Dalby, Emerald, Longreach and the Burdekin. Forestry Plantations Queensland will be answerable to two shareholding ministers, the Treasurer and the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, who have the power to issue ministerial directions. The bill provides Forestry Plantations Queensland with the property rights and powers needed to undertake commercial management of the plantations by giving it the right to deal with natural resource products in state plantation forests and the assets and liabilities relevant to DPI Forestry's plantation business.

I understand that DPI Forestry's current staffing levels are around 750 to 800 staff. About 650 will be working for Forestry Plantations Queensland with the employees remaining as public servants and employed by the state of Queensland. The management of the native forests, such as hardwoods and cypress, as well as the management of quarry materials on state land will be undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water, with about 130 DPIF staff transferring to this department. Included in that number are staff members of DPI Forestry who are currently in the headquarters in Brisbane and who will go to different levels of the particular building, with approximately two-thirds continuing to work for Forestry Plantations Queensland and the balance for DNRMW.

The bill provides for Forestry Plantations Queensland to develop an annual operational plan which has to be agreed with the responsible ministers, prescribes a commercial mandate for FPQ and enables the government to appoint a commercial advisory board to oversee strategic planning and development of the operational plan. It will be important for that advisory board to have not only business knowledge but also a very deep understanding of forestry industries and forestry plantation industries. The operational plan is to provide details about, amongst other things, Forestry Plantations Queensland planned activities, its performance milestones, a range of financial details and information about third-party access, including for recreational users.

The Treasury briefing note provided to the opposition states that the reforms in this bill are 'not opposed by unions and other stakeholders', which is a very carefully worded statement. It is certainly not the same as saying that these reforms are supported by all stakeholders.

I want to turn now to the concerns of recreational users. The Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation prepared a detailed submission and wrote several letters to the state government expressing its concern about unexpected and unpredictable threats to recreation access that may flow from this reform of government forestry functions. The Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation is the peak body representing the interests of the outdoor community in Queensland. Its members include groups such as the Queensland Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs, the Queensland Endurance Riders Association, the Queensland Camping Association, as well as non-profit organisations such as the Scouts and Guides.

In its submission, QORF noted that the former primary industries minister, Mr Palaszczuk, did not even make mention of recreation as an important function of the plantations or native forests when he announced the possible reform of government forestry functions in July 2004. The Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation noted that early on in the stakeholder reference group meetings it was stated that there was an intention that the current access and usage rights would change for third parties. However, it claims that past experience with unexpected and possibly unintended changes to recreation access to what were previously publicly accessible state government lands means that this issue will remain of central interest to recreational communities.

We remember all too well when the regional forest agreements were put in place in south-east Queensland and the debate about the problems that those who want to go horse riding, those who want to use the forests for recreation, beekeepers and those who want to go camping and bushwalking now face in

using those magnificent areas for recreation. I think there is a very strong and sound feeling and belief within the community that if you have areas that are locked up for the benefit of society and the benefit of the environment then you should be able to have reasonable and managed access to those areas so that people can appreciate them, so that families can learn, experience and understand what the bush and the forests are about, and so that people can enjoy them because that is what they are there for, in part—for all to live in harmony in those particular areas.

Some of the ideas that have come out since, particularly for riding, have been crazy. Tracks have been provided beside railway lines for family groups to go riding. That is one of the most dangerous things they could possibly do. Those who go riding are people who love the open air. They love to experience the environment and the bush. It is a chance for them and their children and members of their clubs to undertake that particular activity.

Likewise, beekeeping is probably one of the most useful and helpful primary industry occupations within the forest itself. Very often the beekeepers will have their bees for part of the year in a farmland area like the Mary Valley where they allow the bees to strengthen up on the clover and then they take the bees up into the forest and the bush, into ironbark areas or different forest areas, to get the particular flavour of the honey. Along the way those bees do a wonderful job of pollination, be it in the farmland area or within the native forests.

I think one of the most obvious examples of why recreational users are sceptical is the way they were treated with regard to the Queensland regional forest agreements. As I said, recreational use was not even considered by the Beattie Labor government. The then minister for environment, Mr Rod Welford, told recreational users that they would suffer, in his words, 'no net loss in access'. However, in a recent letter to the Queensland Endurance Riders Association, a senior policy adviser to the current environment minister tried to claim that 'no net loss' was actually taken to mean no loss of opportunity, no net loss of area or no change. The government's policy adviser goes on to state that the so-called alternative trails network being developed—where horse riders are expected to ride next to busy roads and train lines—would meet the government's 'no net loss' commitment.

In its submission on the reform of forestry functions, the QORF also stated that it was concerned that under various corporatised business models the continuing provision of recreation might not be specified or regarded as either a core or peripheral function of the entity. Further, the QORF is worried that under alternative business models, subsequent operations could contrast strongly with the present style of management in which it is obvious that recreation is currently regarded as a legitimate and key function of both the native and plantation estates within state forests, with many of the managers having had training and experience in this regard.

I acknowledge the Deputy Premier's statement in her second reading speech that—

Nothing in the bill is intended to limit the right of people to access state plantation forests for legitimate recreational pursuits such as horse riding.

In addition, the bill states the operational plan must provide FPQ's policies and strategies about providing the services in state plantation forests that were available to recreational users of the forests immediately before this action commenced, unless otherwise agreed by the responsible ministers.

I also understand that the Under Treasurer wrote to the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation on 6 May 2005, stating—

As there is no clear understanding at present of these levels of third party usage, it is proposed that any corporation would be mandated to undertake baseline studies to define existing usage and prepare a visitor usage strategy within 12 months of corporatisation.

While these words are welcome, recreational users are naturally sceptical of the actions to come, and they have every right to be, given the way in which the Beattie Labor government has treated horse riders and others who want access to state forests. Horse riders and other recreational users have heard it all before only to find that, when it comes to the crunch, the reality does not match the rhetoric. That is something that we will watch very, very carefully.

In its submission, the QORF stated that there is widespread concern throughout the recreational and general communities about the general trend of incremental withdrawal of existing access and closure of established and publicised recreational facilities, even under existing management arrangements. These include, for example, the loss in 2004 of picnic facilities at Murrumba viewing area on the Kilcoy-Jimna Road, and the closure of both the Jimna fire tower and the adjacent picnic facilities of the Jimna day use area.

Further, the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation went on to state that general recreation has always been one of the key multiple uses or functions of forestry estate lands and such losses have not been foreshadowed in government policies. Where such reductions in the standards of service also impact on tourism potential—even in the form of daytrippers—in rural areas, the local communities and local authorities fear a further burden. The QORF concluded its point by noting—

These current trends can only give rise to greater levels of concern under other business orientated models of management for the state forests generally and for the plantations and associated native forests, in particular.

In a letter to the Premier in April 2005, the QORF also highlighted the Victorian recreation group's recent loss of access to certain plantation forest areas that were previously owned by the state and now managed by a private organisation. In a letter to the four-wheel drivers' association, Four Wheel Drive Victoria, the Hancock Victorian Plantations Estate Ballarat district manager stated—

When state owned, public access was virtually unrestricted. However, HVP has now developed a public access policy that restricts certain activities and ensures greater control over who and when the public use our plantations.

While I acknowledge that the situation is different in Queensland because we are talking about corporatisation rather than privatisation, the concerns remain the same and I certainly understand the recreational users' nervousness about the future. With these changes and the changes that the Labor government has previously made, I cannot stress too strongly our concerns about recreational uses in Queensland. People know all too well that their use of these wonderful environmental areas has become restricted as the government moves to its extreme Green edge and locks people out of state forests. I do not think that it goes beyond the pale to realise that it could well do the same in some of these plantation areas.

As south-east Queensland's population grows and as we need the lungs of our environment—that is, the national parks, the native forests and the plantation areas—for recreation away from our busy lifestyles and ever-increasing city environment, more and more often we are facing restrictions. The common thought of the average, sensible person is that we lock up areas, we have environmental areas, we have forests, so that we—who also walk on the planet with the birds and the animals—can share and enjoy them.

It is of extreme concern to everybody in south-east Queensland that this government goes to such extreme levels and locks out people who only want to take their families into these areas to enjoy a good weekend hobby such as horse riding or beekeeping or bushwalking or camping and so forth, and who are denied that, over and over again, by the zealots in this government.

In this House we seem to be regularly confronted with legislative changes or new laws that appear, on the surface, to be well-intentioned and are unlikely to have adverse impacts. But it is in the months after a bill is passed, when the new guidelines, codes of practice or regulations are released, that the real day-to-day impact becomes clearer.

Again, the real test of this legislation will be how Forestry Plantations Queensland's operational plan deals with recreational access to state plantation forests and how or whether this plan changes from year to year. Very often, the reality does not match the rhetoric espoused by ministers during parliamentary debates. I hope that that will not be the case after Forestry Plantations Queensland is established.

I turn now to the issue of western hardwoods. Forestry Plantations Queensland will manage the plantations proposed by the Beattie Government. The western hardwoods planning process began in 2002. In December 2004, the Premier announced a proposal on the future of the western hardwoods timber industry. This industry includes 14 sawmills in western Queensland, stretching from near Charters Towers in the north to the New South Wales border, and a number of other smaller sawmills that operate in that area. The western hardwoods timber industry supports about 500 jobs—good working-class, small business jobs—in regional towns such as Jandowae, Wandoan, Monto, Mundubbera, Eidsvold and Theodore, and injects about \$50 million per year into Queensland's economy.

The government's plan proposes to lock up a million hectares as forestry reserves and to have a 20-year transition to plantation timber. In his media release of 14 December 2004, the Premier claimed that this would involve continued logging of state forests for seven years, with mills to then log private land for the next 13 years.

The ridiculousness of the Beattie government's position on western hardwoods and the internal wrangling between cabinet ministers and the Premier's office on this issue was exposed in a series of articles in Crikey email newsletters in 2004. They were anonymously penned by someone high up within the Beattie Labor government under the pseudonym of one of Wayne Goss's koalas.

In one Crikey article, the writer noted that the Premier thinks there is still seven years' worth of timber left over in the state forests, and another 13 years on private land. But it all sounds pretty iffy to industry players. If all that private wood they think is there was available, would it not be getting used right now? He needs to find the wood and quickly or the plan collapses and the 20,000 hectares of new hardwoods plantations will be little more than a living monument to job losses and bad number crunching.

The article in Crikey went on to state what a delightful twist it is for vegetation management policy observers to now watch the Queensland Premier pushing more logging by private land-holders in rural Queensland. That just about sums up the Beattie Labor government's approach to forest and vegetation policy. It is all about politics and nothing to do with sustainable management.

For the past 15 months, the Beattie government has been trying to develop a heads of agreement to be signed by Timber Queensland on behalf of the timber industry, the Australian rainforest conservation industry on behalf of the environmental movement, and the Australian Workers Union on behalf of workers. On 25 February 2005, the Premier issued a media release claiming that they had made substantial progress towards finalising the agreement. We are now in April 2006 and there is still no sign of this agreement that the Premier said was almost finalised more than a year ago. This is hardly a surprise though, as why would Timber Queensland and the AWU sign off on a plan that would cripple their industry and cost hundreds of jobs.

As a result of the Beattie Labor government's refusal to admit its plan is flawed, sawmill operators and timberworkers have been left in limbo with no certainty for the future with the Beattie government only providing short term wood supply agreements.

A major hole was shot in the Premier's plans in August 2005 when all DPI Forestry managed native and plantation forests were awarded a world leading certification for sustainable forestry management. The Australian Forestry Standard, AFS, sets criteria for sustainable forest management from an economic, social, environmental and cultural perspective. It has been endorsed by every minister with responsibility for forestry from the Commonwealth, states and territories. When announcing the achievement, former Labor primary industries minister Mr Gordon Nuttall said—

DPI Forestry's certification to the AFS will give the Queensland timber industry a vital trading edge to capture the growing market for environmentally certified products.

One really has to wonder about the priorities of this Beattie Labor government when it wants to shut down an industry that has been recognised internationally for sustainable forest management. We are still yet to hear anything from the Deputy Premier or anyone else in the Beattie government to explain the apparent contradiction in their plans to shut the timber industry out of state forests in the western hardwoods area and the awarding of the AFS certification for this same land.

Any government or community with any semblance of environmental responsibility would like to think timber came from an area like the western hardwoods region which is so well managed and so sustainable that it receives the certification of this internationally recognised standard. It is not timber that is coming from the clear felled areas of Indonesia or Malaysia or elsewhere which is going to have to be imported into Queensland and Australia to meet the needs of Australia, but timber from an area which is only gone into every so many years, sometimes up to 40 years. The trees in those blocks are marked by the foresters. Only particular large mature trees can be taken. That allows the adolescent trees to reach up to the light and continue the life cycle of the trees. They are not able to take the trees with the big hollow limbs that have the birds in them and so forth; there is a very careful selection program. When they go into one of these blocks, it could be only once in every 40 years, it amounts to something like two or three trees per three football fields. That is why this is so sustainable. It is one of the most environmentally sustainable, sensible, logical and practical systems in the world. At a time when all over the world people talk about the ozone layer and global warming and trying to have environmentally sustainable industries, here is something that grows and is replaced and is managed by expert professional foresters and at the same time enables the forest to grow stronger—

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr HORAN: It allows the adolescent trees to grow up. It is managed by people with—

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Copeland): Order! Member for Southport!

Mr HORAN: I hear the member for Southport who lives on the sand beside the ocean sprouting his knowledge about trees. This system is so sustainable and so sensible it is just crazy what the government is doing. At the same time they are locking out so many people from this industry, working people with generations of knowledge. We heard today from the Deputy Premier about the buy out of some of the sawmills and the logging in the area, just simply taking it away out of those areas. Where is the timber going to come from? Are we going to import it from Malaysia, from all these places where the forests of the world are raped, from where, as we see on the TV at night, they clear fell? Why can we not have something so sensible, so environmentally sustainable that it has stood the challenge of time?

What we are going to do is lock it up and we will have the biggest fires ever seen in Queensland. If members think the Ash Wednesday fires and some of those fires in Victoria were bad, wait until they see a fire through this area. When all the tracks are gone, when all the systems of management and access are gone, there will be a fire through there and millions of birds, animals and insects will be wiped out and destroyed because the system of careful environmental management, of careful professional forest management, the system of laneways and fire control and looking after those areas has gone. It is locked out; it has been shut down forever.

I also want to talk about the impact on the cypress timber industry. This Forestry Plantations Queensland Bill and the issue of western hardwoods impacts on the cypress industry. It will cover hoop

pine plantations and in some cases cypress plantations. The cypress that is harvested in Queensland is native cypress and very, very important to much of this state.

The Premier's proposed lockup of state forests in the western hardwoods region could also have a very significant impact, as I have said, on the cypress pine industry which produces timber for flooring, cladding, decking, fence material, roof trusses, wall frames and so forth. Cypress has the added advantage of being termite proof. The cypress pine industry is a major employer in several south-west Queensland towns such as Inglewood, Chinchilla and Injune. The closure of key cypress forests would have a devastating financial and social impact on local communities. I know that within the electorate of the Deputy Speaker, in the town of Millmerran, there is a large workforce employed and there are actually some 92 people employed in Toowoomba in the cypress industry.

A recent independent study by KPMG found that the cypress timber industry supports more than 600 jobs and is worth \$45 million a year to the state's economy. In a recent media release Timber Queensland CEO Rod McInnes said that the socioeconomic survey of 21 timber mills showed that not only was the cypress industry supporting the state's huge growth but also it was crucial to the survival of many rural and regional communities. Mr McInnes went on to state—

If you look at a shire like Millmerran, southwest of Toowoomba, you have four mills providing work for 59 people—which is a huge part of that region's economy. And in Toowoomba city alone, you have 92 people working in the cypress mill industry.

This is an industry that is next on the state government's hit list under the statewide forests process but, more importantly, could be affected by the western hardwoods negotiations.

We saw today the issue of the Hyne sell off which was mentioned on the ABC on 28 February and up to today there had not been any formal announcement of those negotiations. Today we heard of the buy out of mills and log buying capacity throughout much of the western hardwoods area of Hyne, of the Emerald sawmill and of mills in the Monto and Mundubbera areas. Workers are going to lose their jobs and a most wonderfully maintained, environmentally sustainable resource will be locked up forever by the extremists in this government who pander to the extreme greens in the crass chase of votes in south-east Queensland to the detriment of good governance, to the detriment of looking after the workers in this state who work in the mills and on the various harvesting equipment.

There are concerns in the timber industry about western hardwoods. In the 21 March edition of *Western Watch* the timber industry's frustration is evident, with the representative group Timber Queensland stating—

Our patience has been worn too with respect to the continued procrastination on the western hardwoods process.

In this newsletter Timber Queensland also wrote about the difficulties they are encountering avoiding the conservation movement's 2.2 million hectare wish list in the western hardwoods region. Timber Queensland states that the industry has had enough and that it will need to bring the relevant issues into the public arena in order to expose this 2.2 million hectare reservation for which no scientific case has been brought with respect to the impact of logging on conservation values. It needs to be brought to the attention of the public of Queensland as it is no more than a misappropriation of land that would make the Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe proud. These are not my words; these are the words of the stakeholder group that has been trying to negotiate with the Beattie Labor government.

One would think that the Beattie government would have learnt from the experience of former Labor leader Mark Latham's disastrous forestry policies which cost Labor seats in Tasmania because Labor had forgotten about the workers and was instead more interested in dancing to the tune of the extreme greens.

In relation to cypress, it is important to give a clear picture of the industry itself and the number of employees involved in it. In Roma, there are 44 direct employees; Toowoomba city, 92; Inglewood shire, 22; Warwick shire, one; Chinchilla shire, 24; Dalby town, three; Tambo shire, 14; Bungil shire, 53; Murilla shire, nine; Warroo, nine; Millmerran, 46; Wambo, five; Murweh shire, 11; Booringa shire, 31; Bendemere shire, three; and Waggamba shire, five. That demonstrates quite clearly the spread of workers in the cypress industry alone and the concerns that they have with this whole issue of western hardwoods. Some of the native cypress forests are spread throughout that area; they are not stand-alone cypress forests in some instances. In many instances they are going to be captured by that western hardwoods area. That is a real concern to people because they need security. Cypress pine comes up like hair on a cat's back as it is harvested and used. The stuff just comes up everywhere, given a reasonable season in that country to which it is naturally attuned.

The Forestry Plantations Queensland Bill provides for the business unit that was Queensland Forestry to be split into two. As I mentioned earlier, the majority of the staff will go to Forestry Plantations Queensland. It will be a corporation sole and, as such, the person in charge will be the corporation. In this case it will be the Under Treasurer, Mr Gerard Bradley, who will be the corporation sole. It is similar to the corporation sole for the Australian agricultural colleges where the director-general of the Department of Employment and Training is the corporation sole. It will have, as I said, an advisory board, but it will only be an advisory board; it will not have any teeth or any management positions.

At the same time, the balance of the staff of DPI Forestry will go to DNRMW, where they will be responsible for the logging that still occurs on the native forests. Logging on native forests will be looked after by those employees in DNRMW who previously worked for the department of forestry. They will also look after the quarrying and other products that come from those areas. Forestry Plantations Queensland will be looking after the actual plantations across the state such as plantations of hoop pine, exotic pines and the hardwood plantations that are developing in south-east Queensland as a result of the regional forest agreement. I have had the opportunity to look at a number of those plantations. I understand that the area that was intended to go under the trees has been achieved. I have to congratulate those people in DPI Forestry and others who have worked very carefully with landholders to establish these plantations for their professionalism. As a result, an industry has developed whereby a number of farmers who had the plantations have moved into contracting and so forth.

In some areas there has been some very good growth as a result of the management of these species, particularly Gympie messmate and spotted gum. The thinning process and management of them has brought about some good growth. Now, with the locking up of the western hardwoods area, lands have to be acquired to provide for plantations of more hardwood species that will no longer be available from that wonderful resource of the western hardwoods. Some of this acquisition has already commenced. A number of negotiations are underway around the Pittsworth and Felton area of the Darling Downs.

One of the issues in endeavouring to replace western hardwoods is that the further they are from the coast the longer it takes to grow a tree because the seasons and the rainfall are more variable. In the time for the actual close-down of the western hardwoods, it is highly unlikely that there will be enough hardwood available through these systems of plantations. No doubt that is why the Deputy Premier came in today and announced the complete buyout and shutdown of a number of mills—because that simply reduces the demand of mills which are buying the hardwood to process it. As she said this morning, the reduction will be something in the order of 25 per cent. However, there is still a need for the wood because those mills were selling that wood. As I said, we will end up importing from those parts of the world that clear-fell. It is a tragedy to see such a sustainable industry being unnecessarily closed down.

That will be the structure. There are reasons for it being a corporation sole rather than a government owned corporation. Firstly, they wanted to keep the staff out of a government owned corporation because the government owned corporation would have employed staff under its particular arrangements. Under this arrangement, the staff will be part of a separate office of Forestry Plantations Queensland so that they remain covered by the industrial system under which they now work. I understand that that is the desire of the staff. We do not have any particular issue with that whatsoever.

Secondly, if it was a government owned corporation there would be problems with native title. Being a corporation sole will resolve particular problems in relation to property rights, access to the plantations that will be under its control and native title issues. One of the important aspects of the property rights contained within this particular bill relates to security of supply. 'Profit a prendre' basically means 'a right to take', and that right to take is in this legislation. So people going into the business of growing these plantations—either private operators or this corporation—are able to take that wood in the future and have some real security in relation to that particular resource.

It is a dramatic change. One of the reasons given for making it a corporation sole is to enable Forest Plantations Queensland to compete with private enterprise. The bill talks about unshackling them from the bureaucratic limitations they may have been subjected to. Of course, they will be tied to the Public Service industrial system. We certainly hope that they will not lose some of their talented staff who might be enticed by private foresters who have a more flexible system that pays bonuses or provides more flexible hours or something that is more attractive to people. That is the reason for the change to a corporation sole. The basic task of this organisation will be the plantations only. Those plantations, as I said, will cover softwood, hardwood and any other resources that might be on those plantations.

It does seem strange that at the end of a bill that is all about trees issues are raised to do with superannuation and parliamentarians' salaries. Some might say, 'You can't see the wood for the trees.' This amendment relates to members of parliament who came to this place after the 2004 election. They come under a different superannuation scheme from those who were elected before 2004. As a result they do suffer some disadvantage. This bill gives them the similar rights to other public servants of being able to salary sacrifice. Under the superannuation scheme that relates to members elected prior to 2004, members of parliament are not able to salary sacrifice. However, those members elected subsequent to that—those elected at the three by-elections as well as future members elected in the next election—will be able to salary sacrifice in a similar way to other public servants, up to 100 per cent.

The other issue that is clarified in this part of the legislation, which I think has always been understood, is that members of parliament cannot receive more than one salary in addition to their base salary. For example, if a backbencher is a member of two committees they cannot get two additional salaries. As I understand it, it does not apply to allowances. They are seen in a different light. It only relates to a second salary. It would apply to the likes of whips, the opposition leader and ministers. This is a very different part of the bill.

We have seen about six different government departments involved in forestry policy in recent times. It makes it so difficult for the forestry industry to operate. The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation, Treasury, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water and even some people in the Premier's department all have some input or involvement in forestry policy. It makes the timber industry feel like it is a political football. It is being kicked around by the various players. It is not being treated as a very important industry. It should come under the principles and protections provided by the EPA but work in its own professional way. This industry needs to run without too many cooks trying to mix up the broth. We have seen as a result partial and full policy paralysis. One of the things that we would do in government is ensure a single forestry policy unit so that everyone knows exactly where they are going.

I want to wind up my contribution to this debate by thanking the staff of both Treasury and DPI Forestry for the briefings that they have provided us. I once again state my admiration for the work that is being done by many of the field staff of forestry in developing plantations and developing new species and new systems for growing plantations and for the consulting work that they are doing with private landholders, particularly throughout the South Burnett area. We certainly face a challenge in the future to have enough timber, and suitable timber, to be able to be self-sufficient.

I do not think anyone in Queensland would want us to import timber from those parts of the world where the forests are being ripped apart and razed to the ground. We would far prefer to see timber sustainably and environmentally produced by the professional foresters in the public and private forestry sectors of Queensland who are so good at their jobs and who are world leaders. We can see this from the accreditation and certification that they have received.

In general, we are going to support this commercial reform of the government's forestry function. It has been operating as a commercial business unit for some time and providing a return to DPI. We remain extremely concerned about how recreational users will be treated by the plantation manager and Forestry Plantations Queensland. We do not want to continue to see the forest industry of Queensland treated like a political football by the Beattie Labor government.

We in the coalition want to see a vibrant, robust and self-sufficient forest industry in Queensland that works under the very best of environmental guidelines, that does good for our environment, that does good for our workers, that does good for our small businesses, and that provides a wonderful product for the construction industry in this state.