

The new-look web site came online this morning. It can be found at www.thepremier.qld.gov.au. It will improve access to important information about the state for Queenslanders and for national and international Internet users. The new site offers more features to meet the needs of Internet users and is more dynamic, interactive and user friendly than its predecessor. The new site highlights major government initiatives, activities and policy directions and enables users to learn more about my international trade missions and other key events.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tree Clearing

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.36 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House and indeed the state of a proposal from the Prime Minister in relation to tree clearing sent to me on 16 February and which I received yesterday, but the department had received it a few days earlier. His letter includes a suggestion for a 'sizeable and sustainable reduction' in greenhouse beyond that flowing from the Queensland vegetation management regime and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. The PM says that he wants 'for example, a guaranteed reduction in the order of 20 to 25 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually' and he wants this from tree-clearing controls in Queensland. That would mean that all permits that currently exist to clear remnant vegetation in Queensland— that is, approximately 250,000 hectares— would be declared defunct over the next year or, alternatively, half of the combined remnant and regrowth clearing would stop.

I know that the proposal would be of interest to Agforce, the Queensland Farmers Federation, environmentalists and indeed the whole community and of course anyone in the bush. I would like to know what they think of the Prime Minister's proposal. I seek leave to incorporate the letter from the Prime Minister in *Hansard* together with some comments I have about property rights, which the Deputy Prime Minister made reference to, so there can be full consultation on these issues.

Leave granted.

Prime Minister
Canberra
16 Feb 2002

The Hon Peter Beattie MP
Premier of Queensland
Executive Building
100 George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

My dear Premier

Thank you for your letter of 10 August 2001 regarding land clearing in Queensland.

As set out in my letter to you of 24 July 2001, the commonwealth's offer to provide matching assistance recognises the national interest in reducing the high rates of land clearing specific to Queensland to assist in meeting Australia's international greenhouse commitments. As indicated in that letter, I consider that land clearing is primarily a land management issue and the responsibility of State and territory governments.

I also indicated the Commonwealth would be prepared to provide a financial contribution commensurate with the reduction in emissions from land clearing negotiated and implemented by your government. Achieving a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will involve a sizeable and sustained reduction in 'business as usual' clearing rates over the past decade beyond that flowing from the vegetation management regime and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. For example, a guaranteed reduction in the order of 20 to 25 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually could provide significant abatement to secure national outcomes from Commonwealth investment.

The Commonwealth does not, however, wish to be prescriptive about how a further significant reduction in land clearing, and consequently greenhouse gas emissions might be achieved. Your government has the relevant 'on-ground' knowledge and is best placed to further develop a workable and cost effective scheme and engender the support and commitment of the Queensland community that is crucial to successful implementation of sustainable land use practices. However, the Commonwealth would require that any scheme to provide for emissions reductions is readily verifiable and consistent with internationally agreed definitions and reporting requirements.

You would be aware that officials of our two governments met on a number of occasions, on a no prejudice basis, to discuss the mechanics of possible regimes to reduce the rate of land clearing. I believe that there is now a basis to continue these discussions in the context of developing a Queensland proposal for consideration by the Commonwealth. It will also be important for our governments to work together to incorporate robust emission accounting and ensure that international climate change considerations are fully addressed. Other specific issues raised in your letter could also be discussed by officials.

I hope that your government will undertake the further work that is necessary to develop and negotiate a detailed proposal that satisfies the Commonwealth's broad parameters. I would expect this would include an estimate of costs that would be shared equally between our two governments. Upon receipt of such a proposal, I assure you that we will seriously consider it with a view to timely agreement on an outcome to this important issue.

Yours sincerely

(sgd)

John Howard

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Property rights is a national issue on the natural resource management agenda and something that all governments—Commonwealth and State—must address.

I agree with rural leaders like Larry Acton that we must address the property rights issue across all natural resources.

You can't just deal with 'water' property rights or 'vegetation' property rights in isolation—that is piecemeal.

It is also important the Commonwealth not attempt to take the high ground of developing principles but then walk away and leave the States to implement the outcomes.

National principles without real Commonwealth commitment are meaningless.

Realistic, sustainable outcomes can only be achieved if the Commonwealth enters into a truly collaborative approach to address this issue.

Mr Anderson's comments that compensation is strictly a 'State' issue is not sustainable. There are major national issues involved and the Commonwealth must carry a major share of the responsibility.

We are already working on the property rights issue in Queensland and no one should underestimate the complexities.

For instance, we have to deal with legal issues; people's obligations to care for the resource; and perceptions about what entitlements people may have.

Mr BEATTIE: What I am asking the community is this: what do they think of this proposal—that is, the 250,000 hectares a year? I urge them to make their views well known. There are a number of other issues here. The Commonwealth has a \$400 million greenhouse gas abatement program. If 25 per cent of this money was used to reduce tree clearing in Queensland, we could reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent. I would urge the Prime Minister to give consideration to that proposal as well, because I think that will help solve this problem or go a significant way to solving it. What I am asking for is community reaction to the Prime Minister's view.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Trade Mission to the United States

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: Tomorrow I will leave on an 11-day trade and investment mission to New York, South Carolina, Texas and California to promote us as the Smart State in order to create more jobs for Queenslanders and further investment in the state. I am going to promote Queensland as an attractive trade and investment destination, particularly in our emerging smart industries such as biotechnology, information and communications technology, education, film and television as well as in our traditional industries such as tourism, mining and primary industries. I will be seeking to develop closer commercial and collaborative research agreements between institutions, organisations and governments in Queensland and the United States. I will be strengthening existing economic and cultural ties, particularly with our sister state of South Carolina and our new emerging commercial links with Texas.

Trade and investment missions are crucial if we are to create new jobs, because one in five jobs in this state is export related, a proportion that rises to one in four in regional Queensland. This means that 375,000 jobs in Queensland are export related. Every time we increase trade, we increase the number of jobs for Queenslanders. I have set a target in Queensland of increasing the number of exporters by 20 per cent and the value of knowledge-intensive exports, including education, by 50 per cent. Among the functions on my itinerary are—

key addresses to members of New York's American Australian Association, Columbia's World Affairs Council and Charleston's World Trade Centre;

signing a teacher exchange agreement with South Carolina;

opening a koala exhibit at South Carolina's Riverbanks Zoo, housing koalas donated through Queensland;

examining South Carolina Nanotechnology Institute;