



Speech by

**JOHN-PAUL LANGBROEK, MP**

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

---

Hansard 21 April 2004

**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (2.41 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill as Liberal shadow minister for natural resources. I am inclined to support this bill in principle. However, I am wary of the sustained attack which members opposite employ against the federal government on this issue.

In his second reading speech the Minister for Natural Resources mentioned an answer to a question of federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Warren Truss. In the answer Mr Truss said that the federal government would not support giving funds to this program. I must say that the words of Mr Truss were manipulated very sneakily and the situation portrayed in a biased manner by the Minister for Natural Resources. The real situation is that the Commonwealth was not the one who excluded the Queensland government from negotiation, as the minister would claim; it was the Queensland government which excluded itself. As Mr Quinn said earlier in this debate, if you choose to go it on your own you must foot the bill as well. You cannot choose to exclude the federal government from your consultation leaving it with no input and then stick your hand out for money. This is another case of buck-passing by this state government.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The honourable member is misleading the House. I ask him to withdraw the comments that he made earlier with respect to Queensland excluding itself from negotiations. As I said, that is incorrect. He is misleading the House and I seek for it to be withdrawn.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Croft): Order! Minister, are you calling for a point of order?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Yes.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** As for the legislation, though, I believe it is necessary for the proposed changes to occur. Again, as was mentioned by Mr Quinn, this is a policy that the Liberal Party has held since the Surfers Paradise by-election three years ago. I was a candidate in that by-election and it has been my view that this policy is the best policy for a sustainable triple bottom line in Queensland. Once again it is the Liberal Party on the cutting edge of policy. While three years ago the Labor Party could make neither head nor tail of this issue, the Liberal Party unveiled a solid policy—a policy that has now been adopted by the state government. It may very well be in part due to the surprising success of the Liberal Party in that by-election in which we outpolled the Labor Party and the National Party.

This is a policy that ensures the sustainability of the environment. In doing so, the sustainability of industry is also assured and western Queensland industrial centres can continue to function. Lack of support for this bill would not strike that same balance. While industry would thrive even more so, the benefit to industry would be disproportionate compared with the detriment to the environment.

Moreover, we are a party that looks at the big picture. As a signatory to the Kyoto protocol as well as many other environmental treaties, our federal colleagues have shown a great commitment to measures that will reduce environmental destruction. One of the positive outcomes of this move is the massive reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. It is very good to see Queenslanders hopping on the federal bandwagon by taking positive steps to reduce carbon emissions. The move has certainly been a long time coming.

The bill finally brings about the carbon emission savings that Queensland has been promising the federal government for years. The bill is estimated to result in Queensland coming in very close to

the 25 megaton saving the federal government asked the state government to provide during the limited negotiation the state government allowed on this issue. I also join with my learned colleague Dr Flegg in his warning to government members that, while we support this bill, we will also be watching closely to ensure that the government continues to live up to its commitment to protect remnant vegetation.

There are also worries with the implementation of the bill. Liberal Leader, Bob Quinn, also mentioned in his speech that there is a concern—and it is one that has been put forward by members on my right—that \$150 million compensation is not enough. The figure is backed by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics. It may not be enough. It is only when the compensation is being paid out that we will realistically be able to gauge whether there is going to be enough to go around. As such, there will need to be flexibility from the state government to ensure adequate compensation.

On this issue, however, I refer to the federal minister's comments, which I mentioned before. He stated that one of the concerns of the federal government was that the Queensland government would not follow through with its share of the promised compensation. I do take this point as put forward by National Party members that the compensation must be paid. The compensation is not written into legislation, and nor does it have to be. However, this bill cannot go through and at a latter date the state government renege on the compensation. As pointed out by the federal minister, the Beattie government does not have a good track record on this issue. So while I support the bill, I would not support a double-back in the area of compensation.

I also commend the intention of this bill to bring together all existing legislation on this issue. One of the past problems was that under an excess of legislation farmers did not know for certain what they could and could not do. This will change. The bill clearly outlines what can and cannot be done, providing a degree of certainty that previously was not present.

In another area regarding certainty, it was realised during the consultation process that regional ecosystem maps were not as accurate as they should be. Just as it has been mentioned by National Party members that modern machinery has enabled environmental control to be more precise, this precision was not matched by those ecosystem maps. With property based maps, as is suggested under the bill, this issue will be cleared up. Owners of properties will know exactly what they can and cannot do with regard to every patch of land on their property.

I submit that this bill should be supported. It is a positive stance on a contentious issue. It is a stance that the Liberal Party has held for a long time and I am happy to see its adoption by the minister. I encourage the government, however, to deliver on its compensation promise and not renege, as it has in the past.