



Speech by  
**Lesley Clark**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

Hansard Wednesday, 19 May 2004

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**PRIVATE PROPERTY PROTECTION BILL**

**Dr LESLEY CLARK** (Barron River—ALP) (8.28 p.m.): The members opposite, and particularly the member for Callide, has argued that individuals should not be left to bear the cost of environmental protection alone. On this we agree. However, to take the next step and suggest that this hotchpotch ideologically driven, American inspired, legalistic path is the way to share costs of managing natural resources is one step too far. It is also impractical and is economically irresponsible.

It has been made clear from the contributions of members tonight that there will be a cost—a very large cost—of implementing this legislation. But the opposition has not tried to indicate how that cost would be funded. It has not indicated whether it would raise taxes or cut services. It is interesting to look at the explanatory notes for this legislation to underscore the economic irresponsibility of the legislation. Under the heading 'Estimated administrative cost to government' the bill states—

There is expected to be a cost to government but this cost will be more than justified by the benefits of the legislation.

And that is it. One sentence and that is all. It will just be justified.

The Leader of the Opposition has lectured us about justification and the scientific grounds for this legislation. However, the members opposite come in here totally unprepared to justify the benefits of this legislation. They have not done their homework. Why is that the case? We need to ask why this legislation is being debated in the parliament. The answer is this: the opposition is trying to shore up its support in the bush. That support was undermined by One Nation and the members opposite think that they have learnt that lesson. Indeed, we have seen the support of One Nation disappear largely. What has taken its place in the bush is the property rights movement.

I have been to property rights conferences, I know the kind of ideological manifestos that they support and I know how much pressure the National Party is under not to be seen to be backing down on this issue. Therefore, what does it do? The opposition introduces this legislation, which has been attempted elsewhere and failed, to prove their bona fides in the bush.

Instead of working with the landowners who are responsible and who understand the need for change, they want to go back to the past to try to re-create some ideological fantasy land where anybody has a right to do anything they want to their land. That is an ideology that we have long passed. We have moved forward from the point that said anybody who owns land can do anything they like with it, but, no, not the National Party. They want to anchor us in that past. It is a past that nobody but the National Party believes in anymore.

**Mr Shine:** Like John Howard, they like the fifties.

**Dr LESLEY CLARK:** And, like John Howard, they are living in the past. It is very disappointing that they are not working hand in hand with progressive farmers and the rest of the community who recognise that we need to manage our natural resources in a way that will be sustainable. It is also quite wrong for members opposite to come in here and argue that the government does not recognise the costs involved in this type of legislation.

The other reason for bringing this legislation to the parliament is to have another attempt at debating the Vegetation Management Act. Tonight we have just heard a rerun of that with the denial of any scientific validation for that legislation. The opposition simply wants to write off all of the scientific expertise that we know exists to support that legislation. Opposition members want to deny the fact that there is a package of measures to support farmers. It is not just the minuscule things that the member for Warrego blithely dismissed. It is working in a responsible way with landowners to provide the incentives and support for them to make the transition to managing their land responsibly.

It is very disappointing that we have to have this kind of legislation in the House, simply so that the National Party can parade their credentials to the people in the bush. Basically, they are misleading those people into thinking that this is the answer, but it is not. Therefore, I appeal to the National Party to recognise the reality. I urge them to actually move into the 21st century and adopt more enlightened natural resource management approaches, rather than this return to the past. With that, I urge members not to support this legislation.