



Speech by

Jason O'Brien

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard Thursday, 22 February 2007

WILD RIVERS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (2.59 pm): I rise to support the bill before the House. Let me start by saying that the hypocrisy of the National Party on this knows no bounds. When the shadow minister went out to Georgetown I wonder if he told the people he was talking to that he came into this parliament and supported the wild rivers legislation. I wonder if he was honest and truthful with those people he was consulting with at Georgetown and told them that every time up until today that wild rivers legislation has come into this parliament the National Party and he personally have supported the passage of it through this House. Those opposite have divided on one clause with regard to the wild rivers legislation. One minor clause is all the National Party has divided on in this House, and that had to do with public consultation.

Mrs Sullivan: Even the Liberals are supporting it!

Mr O'BRIEN: I will come to the Liberals in a minute. I see that Liberal members are on the speaking list again today, but I think we will find that Dr Flegg has been rolled again. I think the member for Moggill has been barrelled over again by the National Party. I would be very curious to know if the shadow minister told those people in Georgetown that he supported this legislation when it was first introduced into the House. The answer is that I doubt it very much. I doubt it very much that he was truly honest with those people and had the intestinal fortitude to tell them that he supported the wild rivers legislation when it was initially brought into this House. I do not know if AgForce supports wild rivers or not, but I do know that the National Party is on the record of this parliament supporting wild rivers—and well it should, because it is important legislation. If it was not unparliamentary, I would give it a clap for supporting the wild rivers legislation because it is groundbreaking, world-leading and important legislation for Queensland.

We are going through a debate in this country at the moment about the Murray-Darling Basin and the fact that we have to spend \$10 billion to try to repair the Murray-Darling Basin. Why do we have to spend \$10 billion to repair that river system? Because the planning was wrong. Because over many decades we did not get it right. Governments of all persuasions at all levels did not get it right. The consequences of not getting the planning right is a \$10 billion bill. If we do not get the planning right now for rivers that are not developed and for new areas that can be developed, then the consequence will be that we will leave our children a \$10 billion bill. That will be the consequence of the proposal put on the table by the shadow minister today. He is rolling the dice with the future of the children of this country and future generations, and he should be ashamed of himself. He has supported this legislation with the National Party and they are backflipping today, and it is obvious that the Liberals have been done over in the process.

The argument that the shadow minister has put forward is that because these rivers are in pristine condition they should not be protected. The essence of the argument is that somehow because they are in good condition we do not have to do anything. I did not quite grasp the logical flow of the debate. The realities of course are that there are increasing development pressures on these river systems. If we give in entirely to that pressure, as the National Party now would have us do, the consequence is that those values will be lost forever until we come up with the \$10 billion to fix them. There is increasing development pressure. That is why we have to do the planning now to ensure that it is economically and environmentally sustainable in the long term.

It is just absolute basic planning what we are doing here. I do agree with what he said in that this bill is a planning instrument. It is similar to undertaking a development in Brisbane. People have to go to the council and put in their development application. It goes through a process that either accepts or rejects the application and puts conditions on the application if it is approved. That is essentially the process that we are putting in place here today. What the shadow minister would have us believe is that there should be no process. What the shadow minister would have us believe is that there should be no application, that there should be carte blanche ability for those property owners to do whatever it is that they want. That is not a right that is extended to anybody in this country or this state, but the shadow minister would have us believe that because these people live in remote areas or near pristine areas they should have that right. Again, it is a simple failure of logical progression.

Mr Hopper: You're right.

Mr O'BRIEN: I am right; thank you very much. That is good, because those opposite have backflipped today. I think it is a terrible shame. I think the National Party did the right thing in supporting wild rivers when it first came into this legislature. It was obviously under some pressure from the Liberal Party to support the wild rivers legislation. But I think it is a terrible shame what it has come in here today to do. It is simply playing politics with these people. It is actually going to remove the certainty of the people that the member purports to represent. This bill provides some certainty and some process for those people to move forward into the future. What the shadow minister is proposing here today would actually remove that certainty for those people to do the property planning that they need to do on their properties. He is playing petty politics with the lives of these people. I commend the bill to the House.