



Speech by

**Ted Malone**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

Hansard Tuesday, 17 April 2007

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## **LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (8.59 pm): I rise briefly to speak on the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Quite frankly, this is the first time in nearly 17 years of Labor government that we have seen a land management bill brought to the House that has a bit of common sense in it, and it is a step in the right direction. Many years ago I used to deal with the old lands department on a regular basis. When I was a few years younger the department of lands was always helpful in terms of dealing with constituents' or landholders' problems. The people who worked within the lands department were magnificent people. Of course over the years they moved out of the department. In terms of legislation that has been brought into this House, over the last 10 or 15 years we have seen a decline in the relationship between landholders and the Department of Natural Resources and Water. Things have deteriorated extensively to the point we are at now. Hopefully, the legislation before the House tonight will go some way towards helping the relationship between landholders and the department, and I look forward to that.

There are a couple of points I would like to raise with the minister. I talk in terms of the state rural leasehold land advisory committee that will oversee the extension of leases up to an extra 10 years. There are a lot of issues to take into consideration in terms of finding whether leasehold land has been looked after properly, whether or not the landholder has been increasing the value of that land and making sure that it is being developed in a sustainable way. I relate to the minister some of the issues that landholders have to deal with. We currently have an outbreak of wild pigs throughout central Queensland. It is heartening to see that the department has got into the act and is shooting wild pigs out on the peninsula because of the effect they are having on turtles. I can assure him that right throughout Queensland—and I know the central Queensland region from Rockhampton to Mackay very well—the pigs are out of hand. It is something that the department really has to grapple with very quickly. Maybe we need to move towards shooting them from helicopters as well.

The damage wild pigs can do to pastures, waterholes et cetera is unbelievable. If a mob of pigs moved through leasehold land, the evidence would be obvious to someone who knew what to look for. However, if somebody from the department who was centred in Brisbane came out to see whether the leaseholders were doing the right thing, I would imagine there would be some concerns about them being able to relate to the damage taking place.

Another thing we are seeing throughout Queensland and particularly in my area is the outbreak of woody weeds and grasses like giant rat's tail. The amount of time and effort that is involved in trying to control those pests is unbelievable and the cost involved is quite extensive as well. I can easily imagine that a person who does not really understand the country could see an outbreak of rat's tail or sicklepod and assume that the property owner was not looking after the property and therefore would not be eligible for an extension of lease. It is a bit like a dog chasing its tail: if they are not granted a longer term lease to look forward to, there would be a tendency not to spend the money to keep the property up to scratch. There has to be a real understanding, and I would implore the minister to make sure that the people who are giving advice to him and the department have some real understanding of the issues behind the scenes.

Then there are the other issues of droughts, floods and rain. In my country in the 1990s we had three metres of rain in 10 days, and that country was drought-stricken country. Imagine three metres of rain in 10 days. There is the effect of erosion and the washing out of grass and pasture. If somebody came in and evaluated that country after rain they would suspect that the landholder was not doing the right thing. There are a lot of issues. I implore the minister to ensure that the people who advise him have a real understanding of the issues in terms of land management.

The other issue that I would like to raise briefly with the minister relates to head leases and subleases—and there are quite a lot of issues involved with that—particularly in respect of Keswick Island where the head lease owners had a contract to build infrastructure on the island, which they have not done, over the last two or three years. The sublessees have spent tens of millions of dollars on infrastructure there that is almost valueless because the head lessee is not doing the right thing. I understand that this legislation does not particularly cover that issue, but I am seeing that there are some things here that may be of some assistance in that respect. I implore the minister to move forward on that issue. It is of real concern to some of the residents in my electorate and outside of it. I do not see any movement in terms of a conclusion to that problem at this stage. Maybe the minister might like to address that. In terms of the legislation, there is certainly some stuff that may be useful if that lease is on sold, and I look forward to some indication in that regard. With those few words, we support the principle of the legislation.