



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL PLAN 2025

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (12.02 pm): I rise once again to voice my concerns in relation to the Far North Queensland 2025 Regional Plan. After the FNQ 2025 plan was launched in Cairns on 9 May this year I spoke about the concerns held by a number of stakeholders in far-north Queensland. Concerns about the drafting of this document have been justified as the provisions of this statutory planning instrument have become better understood.

During debate on the report of Estimates Committee A I raised the serious concerns of stakeholders in the rural sector in respect of policy regulations and mapping developed by the Environmental Protection Agency providing for vast tracts of land to be declared under the FNQ 2025 plan as areas of ecological significance. The AES mapping in the rural landscape and production areas, as defined by the draft FNQ 2025 plan, is an ambit claim by the EPA to secure a further level of control over private land without any consultation with landowners and without any suggestion of compensation.

It is unclear in precisely what circumstances the AES regulatory provisions will be triggered. I asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning several questions on notice in this regard. To be frank, none of my concerns or the concerns of the stakeholders from rural industries in far-north Queensland have been allayed by these answers.

Firstly, I asked the minister why the AES mapping was not included in the FNQ 2025 plan consultation document issued to the general public by the Department of Infrastructure and Planning in May. The minister replied that the mapping was included and was available through Information Queensland's interactive mapping site from the day the FNQ 2025 plan was launched. The map that was included in the original draft document was a single A4 document for the whole of far-north Queensland without any individual property detail available until July, which the minister acknowledges in his answer, and the inactive web site referred to by the minister had dreadful technical problems for most of the time the public consultation was being undertaken.

Secondly, I asked the minister how much private freehold and leasehold property would be affected by the AES mapping. The immense scope and potential impact of the EPA's ambit claim was revealed in the answer. In the Cairns Regional Council 362 square kilometres of private land and 360 square kilometres of leasehold land will be covered by this mapping—a total of 722 square kilometres. In the Tablelands Regional Council 2,853 square kilometres of private freehold land and a massive 51,154 square kilometres of leasehold land will be covered by the mapping, totalling 54,007 square kilometres in that region. In the Cassowary Coast Regional Council the AES mapping will cover 619 square kilometres of private freehold land and 135 square kilometres of leasehold land, a total of 632 square kilometres. This is a total of 3,834 square kilometres of private freehold land and a total of 52,146 square kilometres of leasehold land in those three local government areas. Certainly, this proposal represents a significant land grab by the EPA.

Thirdly, I asked the minister to explain what type of assessable activities would trigger the application of the AES mapping on a property? The minister could not provide a list of assessable developments that would trigger the mapping. The minister stated that during the consultation process questions were raised regarding the definition of the term 'assessable development' which is used in the

FNQ 2025 plan and whether the policy applied to agricultural activities that are assessable under local government planning schemes.

The minister advised that his department was working with the EPA to revise the policy wording and refine the definitions and that the regional plan and regulatory provisions will be modified to reflect the final outcome of these discussions. In other words, the minister and his department could not or would not provide a list of assessable developments, which supports the view of the rural stakeholder groups of far-north Queensland and the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, which has said that the whole FNQ 2025 plan was written on the run.

As I have said before, the state Labor government has presented a flawed plan to the people of far-north Queensland and many far-north Queenslanders know it—contrary to the upbeat assessments offered by the member for Barron River and the Deputy Premier today. The state government should withdraw the plan and go back to the drawing board.