



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REGROWTH CLEARING MORATORIUM) BILL

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (9.40 pm): When rapists and paedophiles have greater legal rights to protect themselves than Queensland farming families, something has gone amiss. This week Premier Bligh introduced draconian new laws which threaten the food security and jobs of Queenslanders and the economic development of Queensland under the smokescreen of protecting the environment. These radical changes to the Vegetation Management Act mean that existing cropping and grazing land will be shut down throughout vast areas of Queensland's food production areas with no reference to science, no right to appeal and no right to compensation for loss of livelihood.

When did farmers become so demonised, so expendable in the eyes of a Labor Premier who did not even bat a botoxed eyelid as she sold them out for Green preferences? Queensland's food producers are the new untouchables who, under Premier Anna Bligh's leadership, are treated lower than the lowest of a new caste system. They are the new have-nots as they have no rights. The Labor elite are the new haves—a government of 11 years returned to power on Green party preferences which it bought in a secret backroom deal confirmed by the member for Pumicestone tonight. It disregarded the damage of Traveston Crossing Dam and the oil spill in Moreton Bay.

Fundamental legislative principles have been thrown to the wind in a wash of Green hypocrisy. We say that the mark of a compassionate democratic society is one that protects the most vulnerable. Today we see that the vulnerable includes those who do not vote for the government in power as they do not have the same legal rights as those who do. This is simply because they own food production land and live in rural and regional Queensland.

I know people who have already lost their jobs because of this retrospective legislation before the parliament today. If there was a genuine public benefit from changing the law, then a fair government would compensate people. If the law needed changing, a fair government, which is acting in the public interest, would give regard to and apply the same legal rights and principles to the farmers as it applies to others who do not live in rural and regional Queensland.

If the aim in this legislation was truly about achieving good environmental outcomes then genuine consultation and cooperative engagement would ensue. Premier Anna Bligh has not done any of these things as her goal is political protectionism rather than environmental protectionism. Every time she attacks the LNP for challenging the scientific basis of these laws and their fundamental legislative flaws, her true motives are laid bare. It is about political bastardry and selling out some of the most oppressed people in this state.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Would the member please withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Ms SIMPSON: I withdraw. Ten years ago Labor ignored our warnings about looming water shortages in Queensland as the state's population grew. Labor members in this parliament laughed, but we were proven right. Tonight we not only warn about the ruthless and unjust marginalisation of an oppressed

minority; we also warn about the impact this will have on the Queensland economy, individuals' livelihoods and future food security.

We have always had enough food—like we used to have enough water in South-East Queensland in previous generations. But that is not necessarily the way of the future if foolish, populist Labor governments keep making these poor-quality decisions. The world faces looming global food shortages. By 2025 global food output must increase by around 75 per cent. The world faces a global financial meltdown which will impact upon those in rural and regional areas even worse than it has on those in our urban areas. It is predicted that there will be a 20 per cent drop in regional economies and even higher unemployment.

To lose substantial areas of existing farming land from production without compensation or due process will cause poverty and hardship. I support sustainable environmental management of Queensland's land resources which respects the rights of landowners as well as the need to ensure food security. Heavy-handed dictatorial regimes seldom achieve sustainability in anything, whatever the social system or jurisdiction. They certainly never drive innovation and improvement. Why does this Labor leadership think environmental innovation in food production is going to come out of a heavy-handed regime such as this? It has not happened historically and it will not happen in the future.

It is time that Queensland farmers, who are producing our food, were no longer used as political pawns by Labor governments and that their skills and abilities were respected and engaged for the future of this state, because we need them. I have heard a lot of new Labor members in their first speeches just about cry into their microphones about social justice and helping the oppressed. They are laudable aims if they are also extended to those who do not vote for the Labor Party.

I oppose these laws before the parliament. I oppose the underlying principles which are about oppressing people who do not have a voice within this government. I support a future where we have environmental sustainability and food security. I am talking about Australian and Queensland grown food, not imported food, not food that comes in from places where we do not know what they spray on it. I am talking about true food security that recognises that we need the food producers of this nation and we need the food producers of this state. It is about engaging with them rather than ignoring their voice when it comes to the best way to manage their land in the future.