



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REGROWTH CLEARING MORATORIUM) BILL

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (4.47 pm): I could not say that speaking to the Vegetation Management (Regrowth Clearing Moratorium) gives me pleasure, but it does give me great pleasure to vehemently and passionately oppose this bill. I feel that it is draconian and takes away our rights and freedoms. I bought my 240-acre property when I was working for Queensland Rail. I can recall selling my HJ45 LandCruiser to purchase the block. I am still paying it off. It was brought to my attention in 1988 as we purchased that block that it was a freehold block. We paid the extra price for the rights to manage that property. One of the things that inspires me to run for parliament is bad governments. It was said at the time that I bought my property that buying a freehold property would protect me from bad governments.

I used to go fishing at Ross Creek and catch mangrove jacks. Then the Goss government came along and told me I could not catch fish in that river because it had banned fishing in parks. In Charters Towers we have beautiful Leichhardt trees. Flying foxes have been living in those trees for seven years and they are ruining them. The reason Wayne Goss wanted to kick me out of fishing in Ross Creek, the reason they took those rights from the land and the reason those opposite will not do something about those flying foxes is to appease a non-productive minority group that has contributed nothing to this state or to this country.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): I ask the member for Charters Towers to return to the terms of the bill.

Mr KNUTH: Absolutely nothing! This is not about the environment; this is about appeasing a non-productive minority group. That is what this is about. Prior to this election, the Greens released a statement saying that in 2006-07 there was almost a quarter of a million hectares of land cleared in Queensland, including 105,000 hectares of regrowth vegetation. The World Wide Fund For Nature called on the Premier to cease land clearing altogether prior to this election. Keen to get them onside, this antirural government promised a three-month moratorium on the clearing of regrowth vegetation based on nothing—no science, nothing to do with the environment, but a desperate measure to win Green preference votes so it could retain government at all costs.

One quarter of a million hectares sounds like a massive amount, but in reality it equates to only 0.1 per cent of the total land area in Queensland. This government did not stop to do the maths before jumping on the land-clearing bandwagon, pushed by the extreme environmentalists. Of the total land area in Queensland, 83 per cent is used for agriculture. If the entire quarter million hectares were cleared for agricultural purposes, which we know is farcical, then less than two per cent of all agricultural land was cleared in 2006-07. What the government also forgot to mention was that this is 37 per cent less than in the previous period.

Our primary producers are not environmental vandals. Their sustainability depends on their ability to manage their land effectively. According to the government's own publications from the department of primary industries in 2006-07, Queensland's primary industries exports were valued at \$6.9 billion, or more

than a quarter of total exports. It is the second largest exporter behind mining. In May 2008, there were 101,000 people employed in these industries. In 2008-09, the total value of Queensland's primary industry commodities is forecast at \$13.137 billion.

According to the government's own website, the moratorium will assist the government to work through how riparian vegetation can support its commitments to improve the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef. So we risk potential economic losses to determine if there are any environmental benefits. I have heard the member for Barron River rave about the Great Barrier Reef and protecting the Great Barrier Reef. I have been out on the Great Barrier Reef, I have fished the Great Barrier Reef and I have also snorkelled on the Great Barrier Reef. When I jumped in the water to snorkel on one particular area of the Great Barrier Reef, I saw an abundance of coral trout, Maori wrasse and parrotfish. For some reason or other, there is this perception that the landowners are pumping the rivers dry and destroying the Great Barrier Reef, but I do not know where you are getting this myth from. Why don't you go out to the Great Barrier Reef—

Mr Wettenhall: It is the science. Listen to what the scientists are saying.

Mr KNUTH: The science? Well, the Australian Institute of Marine Science states that this run-off does not affect the Great Barrier Reef at all, so I do not where you are getting this science from.

If there are no determined environmental benefits, is the government prepared to foot the bill for the loss of income and increased costs to clear? One of my constituents asked me to read out some information that applies to him, and I feel sorry for him. This is about whether the government will cover his costs. He wrote—

My name is Owen Wharton, 3rd generation, Wharton Road.

...

In reference to regrowth clearing, we have a small business, which pays a good amount of tax and is not a bad business which consists of

one late model Komatsu ...
one td 15 series c late model
one Mitsubishi canter ...
one Cat 910 loader.

Our business is clearing and discing, the area we clear is just rubbish, just a fire hazard, that is difficult to contain. We cannot clear this rubbish, approx after Christmas, as the water runs off, to the streams, so we usually start work around April/May.

With this regrowth moratorium we will not have any work, as we go in and clean up the farms, plough, grass, a lot of our customers don't like spraying, that is why they employed us, we have implemented our own environmental management policy which we have been commended for, and also have our OH&S policy, which it has cost a lot of money to set up, if we do not start work with the machines, by the end of April, we will not have the money to meet the payments,

the Komatsu \$4700 per month
the International \$1245 per month
the job truck \$767 per month
hyd plough \$6000 left on the loan

Plus their house payment is \$1,860 a month. I ask: who is going to pay for this while this person goes bankrupt? Who is going to compensate this person if he does go bankrupt? This is the thing. Labor members cannot seem to comprehend this because they do not look at the end product. When a farmer ploughs a field and Labor members see a bulldozer knocking over trees, that is their perception. You look at this and think it is absolutely outrageous, but this is the message I am trying to get across to you. You must listen to what I am saying—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the member for Charters Towers please refrain from using 'you', and would he also direct his comments through the Chair?

Mr KNUTH: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. Do you understand about the end product? If a farmer knocks over a tree, that is not the end product. He ploughs a field, sows the seed and produces a good crop. In the end, we see the good sorghum, the good legumes and the fat cattle from which you end up eating a steak. That is the end product, but that is something you cannot comprehend. This is what these primary producers are trying to achieve—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Charters Towers, would you please direct your comments through the chair, not across the chamber.

Mr KNUTH: There are concerns raised about revegetated areas becoming protected reserves for feral animals, weeds and fire hazards if they are not managed. You only have to look at the sad and sorry state of our national parks to see how successful the government is at managing its land. Our parks are riddled with feral pigs, noxious weeds and dead trees. That is the result of the government's good management!

The Wilderness Society released a report in 2005 comparing the cost per hectare of managing the Cape York Peninsula parks and the Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory. While Kakadu attracts

more than \$10 per hectare, Queensland parks attract \$1 per hectare. This is not about protection. It seems that the government wants to lock up the country but it will not be financially responsible for the management of it once it is locked up.

Primary producers on the other hand manage the land and put in place strategies to avoid the environmental problems, such as salinity, overgrazing and poor water quality—all at their own expense and for the benefit of future generations and the future of the industry. Queensland has the best primary producers in this country. They utilise industry-recognised best practice and scientifically proven methods and they are constantly adopting new and improved approaches to manage the land they rely on. They consider that this is imperative to protect the land they work. It adds value to the production chain because it allows production to continue and income to be earned. I wanted to bring that information to the attention of the House.