



Speech by

## Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 10 February 2010

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Strategic Cropping Land

**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.05 am): Everyone in this House would be aware of the commentary and debate in recent times regarding the tension between resource and agricultural development, particularly in some areas of southern Queensland. Even at the last election the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition thought that it would be advantageous to selectively pick one area in southern Queensland in which he promised to ban mining without any rhyme or reason.

The Bligh government has taken a different approach, whereby we have talked to people, we have listened to communities, we have considered the agricultural and the resource perspectives and we have developed a better way—a better way not based on base electoral politics but on sound data and reasoned thinking.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** They clearly do not want to hear about what is important for rural communities. The Bligh government has moved to protect the state's most important food-growing land from mining and urban and other incompatible development with the release of the strategic cropping land draft discussion paper today. The paper is designed to propose a system to conserve and manage Queensland's key food-producing land for the long term and provide increased clarity for agricultural, mining and urban sectors regarding the government's expectations for strategic cropping land. The initiative sets out a planning framework for the protection of important food-growing land and seeks comment from all interested stakeholders. For example, I am sure the Haystack Road and Felton communities of the Darling Downs will want to have their say and help develop the framework further. This feedback will help identify land areas with the best soil, climate, water supply and infrastructure. The proposed framework ensures that mining, urban or other development that permanently alienates the land or reduces its productivity cannot occur unless it is overwhelmingly in the public interest. Not only is cropping land scarce, but the soils that make it productive are a finite resource that have taken millions of years to develop. These finite and extremely valuable resources must be conserved and managed.

The resources sector is also invaluable. In the last financial year alone Queensland's mining royalties totalled \$1.5 billion. In order for these sectors to co-exist we must have policy and planning tools in place that manage potential land use conflict and provide mutually beneficial outcomes to both sectors. Implementation of the proposed system will involve refining criteria for defining and mapping the state's strategic cropping land, amending relevant legislation to ensure that strategic cropping land is taken into account in the assessment of resource developments and developing guidelines for the assessment of proposed developments that may permanently alienate areas of strategic cropping land. The discussion paper will be available online today and open to public submissions until 12 March.