




Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Thursday, 1 December 2011

STRATEGIC CROPPING LAND BILL

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (12.31 pm): I rise to make a contribution to this debate on the Strategic Cropping Land Bill and draw members' attention—as they should be looking towards you, Madam Deputy Speaker—to the dais and to the coat of arms of the state of Queensland, which includes—

Mr Lucas: What? The red deer?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I say to the Attorney-General that we will leave the red deer aside, we will leave the brogga aside—we will leave the supporters aside—and we will look at the bottom half of the shield and see side by side on the coat of arms of Queensland a sheath of wheat and a mine. The reality is that this state has been built upon agriculture and the resources industry being side by side. They have been a part of this great state's development for 150 years and they will continue to be. This legislation is about ensuring we have that balance right, that we support those two great industries being side by side.

We all know—we hear it a lot in this chamber—that the resources sector is one of the key engine rooms of the state's economy. It is indeed a driving force and we are indeed on the threshold of an exciting new era of economic prosperity that will deliver decades of jobs for Queenslanders. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get the balance of all of these things correct in the context of global economic circumstances. That is as important as it ever would be, because there is a lot at stake: \$100 billion in private sector investment at the moment and 40,000 jobs for Queenslanders over the next few years. But what is also important is the best of the best land, and that is what we have been about as a government in introducing this legislation to protect the best of the best agricultural land in this state.

As a government we have planned for the future. We have brought in policies in the broadest of ways, as highlighted by this bill, that are sensible and workable solutions and that strike the right balance between safeguarding jobs and giving industry the certainty that it needs while protecting the rich agricultural lands in our resource-rich regions.

Our policies are sound and solid because they are based on science. I am reminded of that old television program that went to air in Australian homes in the 1970s—

Mr Lucas: *Class of '75?*

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Not that one. I am reminded of Professor Julius Sumner Miller's *Why is it so?* The LNP could do with a little bit of Professor Sumner Miller right now, because its policies are in no way based upon science. Why is it so? Because the LNP does not support science deciding what is the best of the best when it comes to farmland. The LNP believes that it is not about the soil, that it is not about science; it thinks it is about the visual amenity of the land. That is right: it thinks it is about how the land looks—not whether it is the best of the best but if it looks nice.

The Leader of the Opposition in this House is on record as saying—and I have seen the video of him out in the countryside talking to people—that it is not about the soil; it is about the district, about the community and about whether this is an appropriate place. It does not matter if you go up the hill or on the flat, it is the same: it is about the community. It is about the settlement patterns—the visual amenity of the

place. If it is up there on the hill, it still buggers up the district. I pardon that expression, but that is what he said.

I understand that that is not what he has been saying in the boardrooms. Under the LNP's visual amenity policy, we could see the Swiss Alps becoming strategic cropping land because they just look nice. Under the LNP's visual amenity policy, we could see \$100 billion in projects at risk of going down the gurgler and tens of thousands of jobs at risk. When it comes to visual amenity, the LNP has its eyes wide shut. The tragedy for industry, for Queensland workers and for regional communities and local businesses is that their fate will not be determined by science; under the LNP it will be determined by its whims—a whim that the LNP members think, in their naivety, would protect their collective political hides from the likes of Bob Katter and the threatening menace of his Australian Party. Time after time the LNP members stand up in front of people on the land and tell them what they think they want to hear, what they think will get their vote, what will keep the Katter party at bay. They say that they will stop the mines, they will stop CSG, they will stand up for the man on the land. But it is a different story when they are in the boardrooms in Brisbane.

The hypocrisy of those opposite never ceases to amaze me. We have had members opposite making speech after speech embracing regional planning as the new way forward. Their passion and fervour for regional planning has been a revelation to me. What makes this conversion on the road to Dalby so remarkable is the fact that they have consistently voted against every regional plan that this government has brought to the House.

A government member: Is that right?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is right. Not once have the members opposite supported regional plans brought to this House—not once. So much for their commitment to regional planning to be the policy driver to solve issues arising in the future. Suddenly now, when the Katter party is attacking their heartland, the members opposite have seen the light. Now they are rushing to embrace regional plans with a fervour that I have not seen before. No wonder no-one knows what they really stand for. They have an unelected leader who says one thing in the bush and another thing in the boardrooms. The Campbell Newman experiment is like a reincarnation of the 'Joh for Canberra' campaign. For the second time in Australian history we have seen a political party leader seeking power from outside the parliament. The 'Joh for Canberra' campaign was a disaster and we are seeing it again now. The LNP members are so focused on handing dictatorial powers to Campbell Newman that this week they could not even turn up in parliament to debate important bills. It was unprecedented and it was unprincipled.

I have said it before and I will say it again: we have in Queensland with our mining and gas industries great opportunities for decades of jobs, boosting regional and rural economies and putting Queensland on the map to deliver a bright future. This legislation is about getting that balance right—protecting traditional, strong, great industries like our agricultural industry with prime, top-quality agricultural land but allowing for and supporting the science to determine where that land is, not on a whim. This process is transparent. The members opposite are clueless. Our strategic cropping land policy is open and transparent and allows us to identify and protect strategic cropping land based on well-established and scientifically proven data.

The Queensland Resources Council is on the record as supporting a science based model, as is AgForce. Sadly, the LNP policy is not based on science. It is based on the Dennis Denuto model—'It's the Constitution, it's Mabo, it's justice, the law, er, er, it's the vibe.' So keen, so determined are they, to capture the disillusioned voters turning towards the Katter camp that they are prepared to sacrifice the future economic prosperity of every single Queensland. That is why they are so willing to give up on science, to reject science. Of course, this is nothing new. Rejecting science is in the grand traditions of the Liberal National Party here in this state. Those opposite will not need to be putting people like Rona Joyner in charge of their science education policies.

Mr Shine: She is too liberal for them.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I take that interjection from the member for Toowoomba North. She is way too liberal for this group. We have seen protestations and positions on this policy. While speaking in the chamber in support, it would seem—members opposite have got up and said that they are supporting this bill—they have then gone into a whole lot of reasons why it is no good and why they would do things differently. In essence, one of their key arguments is that the minister for mines has the power, using the public interest test, to do these sorts of things so that it will become the whim of an individual minister, not science. It will be based upon whose mate owns what land, what it is next to, whether—as it was once upon a time in this state—a brown paper bag was involved in that particular project or not. This is not the sort of Queensland that is the modern Queensland that has a bright future, a modern Queensland progressing towards a great continued balance between the terrific industry of agriculture and the great industry of resources. I commend the bill to the House.