



Speech by


# Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Tuesday, 31 July 2012

---

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACT

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (11.35 am): Since April, the vast majority of the issues raised in my electorate referred to the Vegetation Management Act. I am happy that the minister is in the House. It is obvious that in a rural electorate like Burnett, the impact of the Vegetation Management Act on landholders cannot be understated. An act that set out to address broad-scale clearing in western Queensland has slowly and destructively morphed into a macro control of farm management practices for landowners unlucky enough to have properties containing remnant vegetation. By virtue of this legislation and the complete absence of compensation provisions, those landowners continue to bear the costs of the public interest in maintaining remnant vegetation on their properties. Not satisfied with placing that burden on landowners, the former government also placed the onus on the landowners to meet the cost of fixing DERM's mistakes.

Other simple farm management actions like realigning boundaries involving remnant vegetation attracted DERM application fees of up to \$5,000. Land zoned for rural residential purposes under local authority planning schemes had development rights disappear overnight when they were mapped as remnant vegetation. Remapping was conducted at the whim of the former department of environment and natural resources, affecting the vegetation status of a property without any notice of the change being given to the affected landowners. These issues must be addressed as soon as the government's program allows, to provide fairness and certainty for the landowners and to allow the sustainable development needed to grow our great state.

Unfortunately, as if the rural landholders had not suffered enough under the former government, the strategic cropping legislation introduced in its last week of office has now proven to have taken a similar path. Legislation that was presented to the community as being aimed at preserving good quality agricultural land from mining activities now prevents farmers from adjusting property boundaries, despite this matter being addressed in the original state planning policy and being enshrined in local authority planning schemes. Simple farm management actions such as minor boundary realignments are being impacted by restrictive legislation that often defies commonsense. In recent weeks several instances have been brought to the notice of my office and the situation often causes delays in or jeopardises property transactions. Again, if landowners are unfortunate victims of incorrect mapping preventing the progress of development, it may cost them up to \$4,000 to correct a mistake not of their making.

A review of strategic cropping legislation in relation to development under the Sustainable Planning Act cannot happen quickly enough for landowners in my electorate. I am sure that my colleagues would agree that a fundamental premise in a civilised society is that the cost of preserving a resource for the public interest should not be born by individual members and that urgent steps are needed in relation to vegetation management and strategic cropping legislation. I congratulate the minister on the changes being implemented. It is rewarding to be part of a government that is aware of the impacts and is willing to change onerous provisions. We are witnessing the work on strategic regional planning and, in the Burnett, we are working hard to ensure sensible provisions are implemented and revised in regional planning. With further positive work being undertaken into the important review of land tenure, we look forward to a bright future in my electorate.