




Speech By  
**Hon. Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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## **NATURE CONSERVATION (PROTECTED PLANTS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Introduction**

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (12.10 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Nature Conservation Act 1992, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and the Vegetation Management Act 1999 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 [\[2645\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, explanatory notes [\[2646\]](#).

Under the act all native plants in Queensland are protected. A diverse array of native flora plays an integral role in maintaining the health and diversity of ecosystems across the state. However, the previous government's approach to prescriptive, burdensome and costly regulation that ties industry and business in knots without achieving any real environmental outcomes needed to be addressed. As such, a review of the protected plants legislated framework was undertaken. It is a significant piece of regulatory reform that will reduce environmental green tape and improve efficiency for both business and government. The proposed reforms will also enable a high level of protection of our most threatened plant species.

The Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 delivers the first stage of the legislated review and lays the foundations for a new, simplified legislated framework for protected plants in Queensland. The Newman government is committed to practical and sensible outcomes for all Queenslanders. This approach includes overhauling and streamlining assessment processes for protected plants, removing unnecessary administrative and regulatory green tape. We will simplify permit and licence requirements for the agricultural, property development, mining and exploration sectors and for those who harvest and grow protected plants.

Let me paint a picture as to the size and the cost of the regulatory burden currently imposed on Queensland businesses. In its current form, the framework is overly complicated and places a significant regulatory burden on businesses and government, primarily through requiring flora surveys in all instances, with estimates indicating full compliance would cost business \$52.795 million and government \$705,000 each year. This new framework will see those costs slashed by more than \$50 million. Business regulation costs would come down from more than \$52 million to \$2.6 million and government costs would be reduced by more than half. This initiative will slash 60 pages of red tape, another significant contribution to the government's target of reducing red tape by 20 per cent. Adopting a risk based approach to regulation means permits and licences will only be required for activities that pose a high risk to plant biodiversity. All other activities will be exempt. Clearing permits will be valid for two years instead of the current period of six months and the framework will be simplified with the number of licence and permit types being reduced from 11 down to three. Subordinate legislation will be consolidated from five different statutory instruments into two. Put

simply, savings will be achieved by streamlining assessment processes for protected plants, removing unnecessary administrative processes and exempting all activities that do not pose a high risk to plant biodiversity.

This bill seeks to amend the Nature Conservation Act to ensure the effective operation of the protected plants framework in the absence of the conservation plan as the conservation plan will be repealed. Relevant provisions are to be consolidated and transferred to the Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006. The bill will also clarify when offsets can be required, which will be consistent with the requirements of the Queensland government offset policy. It will be made clear when permits and licences can be issued for particular purposes and clarification will be provided on the types of conditions and requirements that can be imposed.

Amendments to the Vegetation Management Act and the Sustainable Planning Act will reduce duplication of assessment requirements by ensuring that harvesting of sandalwood is only assessed under the Nature Conservation Act. Further streamlining and reductions in duplication of regulation will be achieved through amendments to subordinate legislation as part of the review process. The reforms, as I said, will be cemented through changes to the wildlife management legislation and other subordinate legislative instruments under the Nature Conservation Act.

This bill sets the foundation for reforms and takes a sensible risk based approach to regulation that supports sustainable economic development and land use while ensuring protection of Queensland's unique flora. I commend this bill and the explanatory notes to the House.

### **First Reading**

**Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection)  
(12.15 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### **Referral to the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Robinson): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee.