Speech By

Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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NATURE CONSERVATION (PROTECTED PLANTS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Hon. AC POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (4.20 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

At the outset, please allow me to table the government's response to the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee's report No. 27.

Tabled paper: Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee: Report No. 27—Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, government response [3779].

Native plants are an integral part of Queensland's natural capital and are vital to the health and diversity of ecosystems and ecosystem services across the state. Queensland has the most diverse array of native flora in Australia with more than 12,800 known species and more being discovered each year. Of these, 198 are listed as endangered, 390 are listed as vulnerable, 461 are near threatened and 23 are considered extinct in the wild. The remaining plant species are classified as least concerned plants. Least concerned plants are plants that may be relatively common or do not face particular threats at this time.

Queensland also has some of the most unique and highly sought after plant species in the country and, therefore, it is not just clearing pressures, but also the taking of protected plants from the wild for harvesting, propagation or cultivation purposes and also for trade, which places pressure on their conservation. The protected plants legislative framework was established under the Nature Conservation Act in the 1990s with the stated intent to provide for the effective management and use of protected plants in Queensland to manage these aforementioned threatening processes and conserve biodiversity whilst allowing for the clearing, harvesting, growing and trade of plants.

The framework is made up of a suite of statutory and nonstatutory instruments including: the Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) Conservation Plan 2000; the Nature Conservation (Administration) Regulation 2006; the Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006; the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006; and the Nature Conservation (Protected Plants Harvest Period) Notice 2013. The framework differs from other vegetation legislative regimes in that it provides for the specific protection of individual plant species listed under the Nature Conservation Act. It does not regulate broadscale land clearing or clearing of remnant vegetation or regional ecosystem which is managed under other processes, most of which have come into play since the protected plant framework.

In its current form the framework is overly complicated and places a significant regulatory impost on business and on government. There are a number of specific issues with the existing framework recognised by both those it purports to regulate and those involved in implementing it. Most of these relate to the convoluted and burdensome nature of the legislative framework. Estimates

indicate that based on the assumption of full compliance, the current regulatory burden imposed on business and government is approximately $52.8 million and $705,000 respectively per annum.

It is particularly complex. Proponents currently need to refer to up to six statutory instruments to know how to comply. Provisions are also ambiguous in the detail and are dispersed throughout the act and subordinate legislation. It is also highly restrictive and onerous, as whilst there are a number of exemptions, the framework operates from the principle that all individual plants everywhere are regulated with limited consideration of the level of risk or consequence. This is unrealistic and also inefficient; for example, the currency period of a clearing permit is only six months, therefore, if clearing has not commenced within this time—which is often the case with petroleum and gas or development projects—proponents need to resurvey the land and reapply for a clearing permit, adding unnecessary costs and delays to business. Added to this is that a clearing permit authorises the clearing of plants identified, not the clearing of the impact area. This has meant that if other plants are identified on site after the clearing permit has been issued, proponents need to apply to amend the existing clearing permit to include this new plant. This further adds to uncertainty and delay costs for business.

Compliance with this framework has been historically low in some sectors. In part, the complexity and ambiguity of existing regulatory requirements has meant that communication and subsequent awareness of regulatory requirements has been poor. This is particularly the case with the rural sector; however, it must be said that one of the biggest issues is that the framework has been set up in such a way that it is almost impossible for the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection—and, might I add, its predecessors—to enforce, as it protects on the basis of what plants could be found on that site and not what is known to be there. What this means is that the government has been hard-pressed to prosecute, monitor or even know of illegal activities because how do you prove that something was there after it has been cleared if no record of it existed in the first place?

The review of the protected plants legislative framework was initiated to overcome the suite of issues that I have just identified and specifically to reduce the burdensome nature of the framework, simplify legislative provisions and provide clarity for regulatory requirements, streamline assessment processes and improve efficiency for both business and government, while at the same time maintaining a high level of protection for our most threatened plant species. The review looked at both the Nature Conservation Act and the suite of subordinate legislation which make up a protected plants legislative framework.

The Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 delivers the first stage of the legislative review. The bill sets out the changes necessary to primary legislation, including the NCA, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and the Vegetation Management Act 1999. Extensive amendments will be required to subordinate legislation to complete the legislative review which will follow passage of the bill. For this reason, the bill itself contains relatively few amendments; however, it will set up the overarching framework and lay the foundations for the required amendments to subordinate legislation.

I will now highlight the key elements of the bill and how this will facilitate a new and simplified protected plants framework on which the department has widely consulted. As a whole, the regulatory reforms are forecast to reduce regulatory burden and compliance costs to government and business by $15.5 million per annum. This will be achieved by overhauling the existing framework to streamline assessment processes, remove unnecessary administrative and regulatory burdens and simplify the permit and licence requirements. A risk based approach to regulation will be adopted so that a regulation will only capture activities that pose a high risk to plant biodiversity. All low-risk activities will be exempt under the framework and will not require a permit or licence.

Regulatory, educational and compliance efforts will consequently be focused on high-risk activities. A high-risk area will be defined as an area that contains a known record of an endangered, vulnerable or near threatened plant or is an area mapped by government as having a strong likelihood of supporting such species due to its high biodiversity features. Notably, for clearing this will mean the requirement to undertake flora surveys will be removed except where the proposed clearing activity is in a high-risk area.

A flora survey trigger map will be publicly available and provided to potential applicants which will identify those high-risk areas where a flora survey will still be required. The mapping will also be able to be interrogated down to property level, and I understand that was an issue raised during some the committee's consideration. This is expected to reduce the number of flora surveys currently required by 97 per cent and will not only provide significant cost savings, but will also provide greater certainty for applicants in that they will know which areas are high risk and when a clearing permit is

required. Perhaps most importantly, they will also know which areas should be avoided so that due consideration can be given in the early design and planning stages of projects. The flora survey trigger mapping will be able to be amended over time as new information becomes available regarding the presence of endangered, vulnerable or near threatened—otherwise known as EVNT—plant species. Modelling will be conducted to identify areas to target for improving information.

The clearing of least concern plants, except where these plants form part of the immediate supporting habitat of an EVNT species, will be defined as low risk and will be exempt from permit and regulatory requirements. This is expected to reduce the number of clearing permits required by 50 per cent. Again, this is not only a significant cost saving for business, but it will also free up resources within the DEHP to enable its efforts to be focused on activities that pose the highest risk.

Protection for our protected plants: I would like to tackle this perception head on, as it is far from the truth. The current framework is structured in such a way that in almost all circumstances a plant identification survey is required to be conducted to even determine eligibility for an exemption whenever anyone wishes to clear native plants. As I have already mentioned, the cost of undertaking such surveys under a full compliance scenario is estimated at around $48 million a year, which is an enormous impost on business. This model has, not surprisingly, proven unrealistic, and compliance with the legislation has been limited, particularly across the rural sector.

As I stated earlier, the capacity for EHP to enforce compliance is limited. Ironically, this is for the very reason that those opposed to these reforms put forward as their reasoning—that for much of Queensland there is insufficient knowledge of the distribution of protected plants. This is undeniably the case. However, the current framework is not capable of the universal protection it purports to deliver. As I have said, it is nigh on impossible for EHP to prove that a survey was reasonably required and, hence, that a plant was illegally cleared unless the clearing is occurring in proximity to a known record of a protected plant species. And this assumes that the department is aware of the clearing activity, which it regularly is not, particularly for smaller rural clearing activities that require no other approvals. The current model does not even require that survey information be provided to EHP and, hence, provides no avenue for systematically increasing knowledge of plant distribution. In other words, the current system is deeply flawed and is not delivering the protection that those who oppose these reforms would claim.

Whilst the VMA has been able to utilise satellite and aerial imagery and modelled data to fill knowledge gaps and provide extensive mapping of woody vegetation across the state, the same application cannot be made for plants because they are often small and cryptic and sparsely located across the landscape. Detailed recording and mapping requires on-ground surveying and verification of samples by accredited experts. The government's reforms acknowledge these realities and will put in place a realistic and logical framework which will allow for educational and compliance efforts to be focused on the areas of known highest conservation risk and not place an excessive onus on proponents to fill knowledge gaps.

The new framework will be able to be expanded or contracted over time as new plant distribution information becomes available, be it through the efforts of proponents, government or others. There is, of course, a logic in proponents taking responsibility for assessing environmental values their activities may impact on, but in this case the bar for landholders in particular is set unrealistically high, and this has led to a system that is not delivering what it was established to do.

The risk based approach will also be applied to harvest and growing activities. Regulation will be focused on the sustainability of the activity rather than the purpose of the activity. Least concern plants will be exempt from requiring a harvest and growing licence, except where they have been identified as special least concern plants.

I would also like to make the point that the term 'special least concern plants' is not being introduced to create a new category of a protected plant but rather to simplify existing restrictions and regulatory provisions relating to restricted least concern plants. To be clear, the current framework places various harvesting restrictions on EVNT and certain least concern plants listed under schedule 1 of the conservation plan, in the harvest period notice or as type A and type B plants in the regulations. The restrictions are in place because these plants face particular pressures from harvesting, largely because they are commercially valuable and often have unique traits or they are difficult to propagate and/or replace in the wild.

The current framework deals with these harvesting pressures by totally restricting whole-plant harvest of these species from the wild for commercial purposes. This regime is limiting in that it does not allow industry to develop long-term, sustainable and innovative approaches to harvesting whole plants from the wild. Under the new framework, existing blanket restrictions will be removed from these plants and proponents will be able to harvest whole plants from the wild under a harvesting licence where sustainability can be demonstrated. This will apply for all EVNT plants and special least

concern plants. Special least concern plants are those restricted least concern plants of which the taking and use are at risk of not being ecologically sustainable, primarily due to their high commercial demand or the particular biological traits of the plant, such as that they are slow growing. These plants will be regulated in the same way as EVNT plants for harvesting purposes. However, as they generally do not face particular clearing pressures they will continue to be exempt from a clearing permit in almost all circumstances.

The bill aims to simplify the framework by removing regulatory provisions that are no longer necessary or are better placed in the subordinate legislation. For example, exemptions are currently spread across a number of legislative instruments and are proposed to be consolidated within the Wildlife Management Regulation. I know that the transfer of exemption provisions from the act into the subordinate legislation has raised some concerns and that the report of the committee sought further clarification about whether it adversely affects a person's rights or liberties or has sufficient regard to the institution of parliament. I will address this point specifically.

This amendment will not change an individual's rights or liberties under the act, and an affected person will not be adversely affected by the delegation. It is a reasonable and appropriate way of handling this policy framework, as the exemptions will be located in subordinate legislation and will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny, as per the requirements under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992. Section 89(1)(h) of the Nature Conservation Act already provides the power to delegate an exemption to a regulation. In fact, that is where the majority of exemption provisions are currently located.

The bill does not seek to change this existing power. Some exemptions are, however, currently included in the act, and it is intended that these be consolidated in a single regulation along with all other existing exemptions. Retaining these exemptions in the act may provide for more visibility in limited circumstances so that a person need only refer to the NCA to know if they are compliant. However, for most circumstances this will not be the case, as all other exemptions are contained in the subordinate legislation, within three different instruments. Currently, affected persons have to refer to multiple statutory instruments to know if they are in breach of their regulatory requirements. Locating all exemption provisions into one consolidated statutory instrument, which also contains provisions relating to how persons who are not exempt can comply with the act's requirements, is currently provided for under the primary legislation and will actually enhance a proponent's ability to clearly determine their obligations under the framework and make the legislation easier to understand and comprehend.

Moving to other features of the new framework, two pieces of subordinate legislation, including the conservation plan and the harvest period notice, will also be repealed. This will further simplify the framework and reduces the number of statutory instruments that proponents need to refer to. The permit and licensing system will also be simplified, and the number of permits and licences currently applying to the clearing, harvesting and growing of protected plants will be reduced from 11 to three. There will be three standardised permits and licences for protected plants including a clearing permit, a harvesting licence and a growers licence.

The bill also provides a clear head of power for the chief executive to make assessment guidelines. This will provide for consistency and transparency in decision making and will be made publicly available so that applicants are provided with clear and consistent information on how their application will be assessed. This is expected to reduce the number of information requests relating to clearing permits received by the department because applicants have not understood the clearing permit application requirements. New fees will be introduced that are proportionate to the departmental resources required to assess a permit or licence application to enable government to adequately resource the framework and process applications in an efficient and timely manner, resulting in reduced delay costs to business.

I would now like to provide an overview of how the new regulatory framework will benefit each of the key sectors captured by this framework. The mining sector will benefit significantly from these reforms. While mining leases granted under the Mineral Resources Act 1989 are currently exempt from protected plant clearing permits, all other mining tenures, including coal and mineral exploration permits, mineral development licences and mining claims, are not currently eligible for any exemptions. That means they are captured to the fullest possible extent. Under the new framework it is proposed that the existing exemption applying to mining leases will be removed. Instead, there will be a consistent approach applied which will be based on the risk of the clearing. Under this proposal, adopting a risk based approach will remove highly restrictive and onerous regulation on all other mining tenures and ensure that the department applies consistent and fair standards across all land tenures. This is expected to result, as I said earlier, in a 97 per cent reduction in flora surveys for mining tenures currently captured by the framework. Incredibly, this equates to an area of

approximately 766,000 square kilometres for mining exploration permits that will no longer require extensive surveying under the NCA.

Under this proposal also, all pre-existing leases would retain the exemption under the new framework. This will cover all current and future mining activities on that lease irrespective of the levels of approvals held under the NCA or any other act. For example, companies with an existing environmental authority, or EA, applying for a new EA or applying for an amendment to an existing EA on an existing lease will all be exempt.

Other resource industries, particularly the petroleum and gas industry, will be among the biggest beneficiaries of these reforms. With the exception of mining and petroleum leases, which are exempt currently, the resources sector is particularly burdened by the onerous flora survey and clearing permit requirements and the limited terms of permits. Flora surveys are required prior to any exploration and feasibility work on site that may impact a protected plant for the entire impact area. For some projects such as coal seam gas, which are linear in nature and therefore can cover vast stretches of land, this is particularly costly and, because they are a relevant development activity, any clearing of least concern plants on state land requires a clearing permit or needs to be undertaken under a class exemption that includes mitigation and reporting requirements. A number of the key changes proposed will reduce burden on this sector. For example, there will be greater certainty over which areas are high risk and where flora surveys will be required, which, as I have just identified, is a particular problem for linear projects such as gas pipelines. Clearing permits will only be required for clearing of EVNT species which cannot be avoided in high-risk areas.

As the clearing of least concern plants will now be exempt in almost all circumstances, the resources sector will no longer be required to apply for clearing permits or class exemptions to clear least concern plants and, accordingly, will not be required to mitigate or even report back to government on least concern plants that have been cleared, as they currently are required to do. Clearing permits will now assess and authorise, subject to impact management strategies, the clearing of the impact area at the point of survey. No longer will applicants have to amend their clearing permit application and subsequent mitigation and offset requirements if an additional EVNT plant is found after the clearing permit has been issued. This can be a costly delay and also adds to the administrative burden and assessment load of the department.

The development and infrastructure sector is also captured under the framework, as it is generally assessable development under the Sustainable Planning Act, and is therefore not eligible for any existing exemptions applying to the clearing of least concern plants. Therefore, this sector also has to apply for class exemptions or a clearing permit for any clearing of least concern plants. Development and infrastructure projects will benefit in particular from the extension of the currency period of clearing permits from six months to two years, as this provides more realistic time frames in which to complete clearing activities, particularly for staged development and large linear infrastructure projects. Projects will no longer be held up due to clearing permits expiring and waiting for permits to be reissued, which adds uncertainty and delay costs to these projects.

Projects will also be provided with upfront information for high-risk areas and, accordingly, can be designed and planned to minimise impacts to protected plants where possible. In addition, clearing being undertaken to maintain existing infrastructure and/or clearing in an area which has been legally cleared under a clearing permit within the preceding 10 years will now be exempt under the new framework. This will provide greater certainty to applicants and will ensure that routine clearing activities which had already been assessed and appropriately mitigated and/or offset do not continually come back to the department for assessment.

Moving to the agriculture sector, under the current framework any clearing undertaken by landholders and graziers and for any agricultural purpose such as fodder harvesting or weed management is legally required to undertake a plant identification process, such as a flora survey, prior to the clearing being undertaken. The risk based approach will mean that the agriculture sector will now only be required to undertake surveys if the clearing is proposed in a high-risk area. A clearing permit will only be required if impacts to EVNT plants cannot be avoided. There will also be a number of exemptions provided for land management activities, including maintaining existing infrastructure such as fence lines and watering points and in some circumstances for fodder harvesting and weed management purposes. Fee concessions will also be available for clearing that is necessary to establish essential property infrastructure.

Moving to the horticulture sector, for many years the native plant industry, particularly growers, harvesters and retailers, has been tied up in red tape and has had particularly onerous licencing and trade restrictions to meet in order to grow, buy, sell or export any protected plants. This has significantly stifled the industry to the point where it is now very hard to source native plants and many

nurseries are no longer in the business of buying or selling them. This sector will benefit significantly from changes proposed to harvesting and growing, as regulation will now be focused on the sustainability of the activity rather than purpose. Trade will be deregulated and buyers and sellers of native plants will no longer be required to apply for trade licences, removing an unnecessary cost and restrictions faced by this industry. The simplification of the permitting and licensing system will now allow EVNT plants to be harvested for seeds and plant parts for large scale growing purposes where sustainability can be demonstrated. This, coupled with the new exemptions for least concern plants and increased opportunities to access whole plants, is also expected to encourage growth in the native plant horticultural industry.

The reforms will also mean that the government will no longer be attempting to provide comprehensive protection for all plants across Queensland, which is not feasible or enforceable, and this will be a gain for the conservation sector. However, this does not mean that the government will be reducing protection of our threatened plants. Rather, the reforms will enable the department to redirect resources to adequately assess high-risk activities in an efficient and more effective manner and focus our compliance and enforcement efforts on activities which provide the greatest risk. All in all, we believe that this will result in better conservation outcomes for protected plants, and I want to explain this in more detail.

Under these reforms we will be making clear what activities will be captured under the framework and how activities will be assessed. Applicants will now be required to undertake a flora survey for any high-risk activity and flora survey guidelines will be made available to the public to ensure that these are consistently undertaken and in accordance with an agreed methodology. While flora surveys are currently required for all clearing activities, the government has never specified how these should be undertaken and nor—and this is rather ironic—has it ever even required that results of the surveys be provided to EHP or its predecessors to provide evidence of the plants found. This has meant that many flora surveys currently undertaken are potentially of varying quality or do not actually provide any conservation benefit at all. Under these reforms, results of flora surveys will now be required to meet a standard endorsed by the Queensland Herbarium and are to be supplied to EHP for verification. This will be used to fill knowledge gaps and improve monitoring of emerging threats to plants.

In addition, loopholes will be closed, including those around illegal harvesting of whole plants such as sandalwood and the permitting and licensing system simplified so that proponents will know clearly their regulatory requirements. Accordingly, proponents will now be expected to comply with the framework and the education and enforcement effort will be improved by EHP to support this. The introduction of new fees to recover assessment costs to government will mean that the assessment of applications can be adequately resourced rather than the department having to stretch its resources to assess all activities regardless of level of risk or sustainability of activity. This will ensure that activities can be effectively assessed and monitored and will also mean resources will be freed up to focus compliance and enforcement, further improving outcomes for protected plants. In summary, this bill sets the foundation for reforms that take a sensible, risk based approach to regulation that supports sustainable economic development and land use whilst ensuring protection of Queensland's unique flora. I commend this bill to the House.

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 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (7.31 pm), continuing in reply: It is with pleasure that I rise to continue my concluding remarks on the second reading of this bill this evening. Prior to the dinner break, I was speaking at length about flora surveys and the accusations and the hysteria from the member for South Brisbane that a process that had no rigorous scientific structure compared to how flora surveys were established and no compulsion for those surveys to be provided to the department is somehow better than a scientifically robust methodology prepared in conjunction with the Queensland Herbarium and verified upon submission to the EHP. I just present that to all Queenslanders and to members of this House for what it is—the facts. There is a scientific basis to the flora survey process that we are proposing under this new framework.

I now turn to the moving of the exemptions in particular into the regulation. Again, that seems to have caused some consternation. I am inclined to again read what I said in my second reading speech. I will, just for the sake of it being recorded in *Hansard* again, so that people are very clear. I stated—

The bill aims to simplify the framework by removing regulatory provisions that are no longer necessary or are better placed in the subordinate legislation. For example, exemptions are currently spread across a number of legislative instruments and are proposed to be consolidated within the Wildlife Management Regulation. I know that the transfer of exemption provisions from

the act into the subordinate legislation has raised some concerns ... about whether it adversely affects a person's rights or liberties or has sufficient regard to the institution of parliament. I will address this point specifically. This amendment will not change an individual's rights or liberties under the act, and an affected person will not be adversely affected by the delegation. It is a reasonable and appropriate way of handling this policy framework, as the exemptions will be located in subordinate legislation.

I point out here that, contrary to what was suggested by the member for South Brisbane, the exemptions being in subordinate legislation will make them subject to parliamentary scrutiny, as per the requirements under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992. I stated further—

Section 89(1)(h) of the Nature Conservation Act already provides the power to delegate an exemption to a regulation. In fact, that is where the majority of exemption provisions are currently located.

At this point it might be salient to point out who put that clause in that act and who put those exemptions in those regulations. It was the former Labor government. So for the member to come in here tonight and suggest that somehow we are being frivolous with the fundamental privileges of not only Queensland but of people who are particularly concerned about protected plants is just completely and utterly misleading given that the same intent was delivered by the previous Labor government through section 89 of the Nature Conservation Act and through putting the exemptions into those regulations. All we are seeking to do is to consolidate those exemptions into one regulation so that it is simpler for any interested party to understand their responsibilities under this framework and to be able to act upon it.

Also, contrary to the comments made by the member for South Brisbane—she certainly was on a roll this evening—under the legislation it is still an offence to take a protected plant. Any suggestion otherwise is erroneous. Let me say that again. Under the legislation, it is still an offence to take a protected plant.

The member for South Brisbane also made the suggestion that businesses would be disadvantaged. The suggestion was that a person who had invested in a nursery industry or who had invested in plants, improvements and sales would somehow be disadvantaged by allowing plants to be removed from the wild. I remind the member for South Brisbane that this legislation is actually a conservation act, not a trade act. This legislation is about ensuring that we continue to have sustainable populations of our most endangered, vulnerable, near-threatened species and some special least concern species in the wild. Again, I go back to what I said about the comments of the member for Gladstone. Any harvesting must demonstrate that there is a sustainability plan. This legislation is about conserving those protected plants. It is not about structuring a trade or an industry.

Another concern that the member for South Brisbane raised erroneously was that somehow this green-tape reduction activity, this improvement in the legislative framework, was an abandonment of protection for protected plants. It is quite the opposite. I like to liken the old legislative framework for protected plants to something like communism. It might have sounded great in theory but we all know that the examples of it in practice, despite the best efforts of the communist member for South Brisbane perhaps, have been rather—

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks offensive. I am actually not a communist and I ask that the member—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order!

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find the remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: They were personally offensive?

Ms TRAD: Yes, they were.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the minister to withdraw.

Mr POWELL: I withdraw. I will go back to the analogy. The current legislative framework for protected plants is like communism. It might have sounded great in theory—the ideals, the principles behind communism—but it never worked in theory. The vast reams of red and green tape encompassed in the six different pieces of legislation and subordinate legislation and regulations that are the current framework for protected plants in this state is like communism. It is all smoke and mirrors. There is only a perceived level of protection because, in practice, the framework simply is not complied with. No-one can understand it. No-one can put it into practice. No-one, even if they did a flora survey, would know whether it was up to scientific standards and then rarely, if ever, submitted it to the department. It is a perception of protection. Added to that, because of the complexities, the framework is also incredibly hard to enforce, to monitor and check for compliance and make the relevant enforcement.

We are moving to a streamlined approach that focuses our attention on endangered, vulnerable, near threatened species and a number of special least concern species. That means that not only industry but the conservation sector and the EHP as the regulator can focus their attention on those high-risk species and make sure that we have a robust system that not only delivers on their protection but also allows us as a regulator to ensure that we check and monitor for compliance and, if necessary, take the relevant enforcement. These changes will allow us to do this. These changes will deliver far better environmental outcomes, as I said, than the current paper trail that is the legislative framework for protected plants in this state.

That corrects the record when it comes to the claims made by the member opposite. This framework is about producing a better outcome for industry, be that the agricultural industry, the horticultural industry itself in terms of harvesting, selling and trade, the resources industry, the conservation sector and the plant species themselves. This is a better outcome for everyone. It produces significant dollar savings. It produces significant time savings for industries not only involved in undertaking flora surveys but also getting their permits. It provides significant time and dollar savings for EHP when receiving the flora surveys to verify those and make use of the data we receive. And it will produce a better outcome for this state when it comes to protected plants.

In summing up, I would like to thank a number of departmental staff who have worked on the preparation of this framework and who still have much work to do in preparing the subordinate legislation that will sit under it. In particular I thank Jacqui who was here this evening assisting, Helena, Caroline, Phillippa, Sally, Andrew, Wade and Geoff for their work and their tireless efforts in consulting with all interest groups to make sure that tonight we have the best package to offer to the parliament for its consideration. I commend the bill to the House.