




Speech By
Steve Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

LAND PROTECTION LEGISLATION (FLYING-FOX CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (8.51 pm): I rise to speak against this private member's bill, the Land Protection Legislation (Flying-Fox Control) Amendment Bill. Constituents in my electorate suffered many years under the previous member for Burnett, with false hope and promises being offered that his private member's bills would be a process for actual alternatives. His failures only highlight the years of neglect constituents have to endure until a strong LNP government within one year has corrected eight years of poor representation. One example of the many failures was his inability to address the damage caused by flying foxes. This is a serious issue and for decades growers and residents in the electorate of Burnett have been trying a range of non-lethal methods to deter flying foxes from their crops and homes like lighting infrastructure, fright, netting and other different types of mitigation. This process is something the LNP has had to do to protect livelihoods and lifestyles.

This government has made good on its promises to put the health and wellbeing of communities ahead of flying foxes. In addition, we are certainly willing to do what is needed to protect industries and employment in regional and country Queensland. The costs to farmers and residents in my electorate have been enormous, with little evidence or science to support that any success was achieved under the wildlife management regulation 2006. The previous arrangements did nothing to assist with ecological sustainability of flying foxes. I was frustrated every time I visited a farm or urban area or had one of the farmers or residents contact me that the previous legislation would not allow sustainable, lethal and non-lethal obligations to assist with crop and residential protection. My electorate has suffered with the poor management of flying foxes over many years and finally a sensible and detailed solution has been implemented.

For many years the local member and the opposition gave little heed to the problems that growers and their families suffered because of flying fox damage. In line with the LNP's commitment and war on green tape, local councils will be given the authority to manage problem flying fox roosts in urban areas without having to apply to the state government for a damage mitigation permit. The residents of Bargara are finally able to see some real action to the persistent noise, smell and damage to their properties from roosting flying foxes. One thing that was often overlooked was the psychological damage that these residents endured after many years of neglect. The new laws prescribe that councils previously had to get approval from the state government to respond to the many flying fox issues. We need councils to be able to respond more rapidly and proactively to residents and community concerns.

There are no changes to existing legislation to allow farmers to apply for lethal mitigation permits to protect their livelihoods, and that is under the code of practice. Where a particular grower can demonstrate that they have tried non-lethal methods, a grower now has the option of applying for a damage mitigation permit to shoot a limited number of flying foxes, and I am happy to advise the House that growers in my electorate have been issued DMPs and they are very excited about the LNP's commitment to their infrastructure and their livelihoods. But these laws are not about culling

flying foxes. The rural holders of permits are able to shoot only limited numbers, as we know, and are required to comply with the code of practice regarding acceptable mitigation practices to ensure that any resulting pain or suffering is minimised.

The solutions implemented by this government for growers involved extensive consultation that was undertaken with Growcom and Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers regarding the needs of growers. I believe the new flying fox laws get the balance right. They give growers an additional option of lethal control as a last resort while maintaining strong conservation and animal welfare provisions. This government should consider these circumstances as acceptable. I support lethal mitigation permits in rural circumstances and of course I support the proposed urban circumstances, because for many years people have had to live with damage to their properties and flying foxes have represented a real threat to human health and wellbeing.

It is important to emphasise that this new approach to urban control relates to non-lethal mitigation. It will not authorise shooting or other lethal methods as a means of encouraging flying fox colonies to move on. We are putting the health and wellbeing of my community and the community of Queensland first. We want councils to be responsive, and this strong government will be able to deliver real reforms—something that the previous member for Burnett failed to do. In closing, I cannot support the bill.