




Speech By  
**David Gibson**

**MEMBER FOR GYMPIE**

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**REGIONAL PLANNING INTERESTS BILL; PROTECTION OF PRIME  
AGRICULTURAL LAND AND OTHER LAND FROM COAL SEAM GAS MINING  
BILL**

 **Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (9.17 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise tonight to speak in this cognate debate. The pleasure exists with regard to the Regional Planning Interests Bill because that piece of legislation is a significant piece of legislation that will impact the state of Queensland and provide certainty for those in both the agriculture and resource sectors in a way that this state has never seen. I commend the Deputy Premier and his staff for bringing forward a well thought through, reasoned and logical piece of legislation that will enable this state and the various stakeholders in these important sectors of agriculture and resources to be able to manage the land use conflicts that currently exist.

The State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee had the opportunity to examine the Regional Planning Interests Bill. As has been said and as outlined in the report, this was framework legislation. We accept—and it is recorded in the various submissions and within the report itself—that there was concern with regard to it being framework legislation in that people wanted to see the regulation at the same time. But the process we have gone through and the process by which the Deputy Premier and his department has managed this has enabled the regulation to evolve and to adapt to the concerns that were raised through the committee process. I want to commend the Deputy Premier for that step, because what it has enabled and what it has highlighted is an evolution of the committee process of the parliament. It has enabled the committee process to strengthen and to become a very valuable component in addressing legislation and in assisting departments as they formulate regulation.

I think that point has been lost on the member for Condamine and on some other members. This consultation process has enabled the department to formulate regulation based on evidence received through the committee process. That shows an evolution, I believe, in the strength of the committee process, and I want to thank the Deputy Premier for that.

I particularly want to take this opportunity to thank members of the committee—both non-government members, the deputy chair and member for Mackay and the member for Mount Isa, and government members. The committee approached this task in a very mature, responsible and deliberate way to determine how the framework legislation that was presented for the committee to examine could best be consulted and improved upon. We deliberately extended the submission period so there would be ample time and, indeed, granted extensions for various submitters so we could ensure the views of as many stakeholders as possible were heard.

The committee also provided a period for supplementary submissions after the final public hearings were held. That enabled further comment and feedback to be received. I think it is rather foolish for individuals to quote from one submission that a submitter may have made two months ago, not realising that the submitter has come through that process and in discussion with the committee and in presenting evidence has been able to be comforted that the department and the government

have taken their issues on board. We are now seeing amendments coming through that again highlight the value of the process and the fact that these concerns and these issues were raised.

As the Deputy Premier quite rightly said, full credit to the departmental staff but they do not live on the land. They do not work in the resource sector. Greg Chemello and his staff are very good at what they do in the planning sector. I want to commend them because they have taken that framework—a very tried and tested planning framework that works well, is mature and is well understood across the whole state of Queensland in urban areas—and they have evolved and adapted it to be effective in regional areas, as we see in this bill. I commend those departmental staff.

As the Deputy Premier quite rightly pointed out, it is those who work in the sector—farmers who are living on the land, miners, people who are involved in exploration activities—who are able to provide an additional refining process and feedback to the committee, whether it be by written submission or by verbal contribution at public hearings, that has further enabled a refining of this bill. What we have seen, I believe, over the last four months is a bill that is better now than what was originally introduced in the House. Why? Because the government of the day listened. The government of the day gave the parliamentary committee the opportunity and the time, and reflected the concerns that it heard from the various stakeholders.

As was quite rightly pointed out, not everybody got what they wanted and nor should they. There are competing interests here and we need to ensure there is a balanced approach. The balance between agriculture and mining is one that will always create tension. The committee had the opportunity to visit two landholders. I will not mention them by name, but I want to thank them for the hospitality they extended to the committee. We were able to see two separate examples. One was where coal seam gas interacts with a landholder where there was tension and concern. From my observation, that reflected more poorly upon the coal seam gas company and its internal processes, because we also went to a different property with different landholders where co-existence was clearly in practice. We were able to see the activities of a coal seam gas company and the agricultural activities of landholders working together. In fact, as we were touring we saw a dam which had been created for the coal seam gas companies as they were undertaking their exploratory wells. The coal seam gas company was saying to the landholder, 'We will be removing this for you,' and the landholder said, 'We would love to keep it.'

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr GIBSON:** They were very happy with it and what it was delivering. The location of the wells was a site which was working well, discussion was occurring and co-existence was being delivered—not because it was defined in a piece of legislation but because the landholder and the company involved were able to meet, have discussions and come to an agreement that was mutually beneficial to both parties. That, to me, shows how co-existence can and should roll out across this state.

As we have heard, the Regional Planning Interests Bill provides an opportunity for industries to work together. It is not geared up to ban. It is not geared up to stop activity occurring. Rather, it is recognising a mature approach in which all parties can work together to achieve an outcome.

We need a strong agricultural sector in the state of Queensland. There is no doubt about that. We also need a strong mining and resource sector in the state of Queensland. We need them to be able to work together. What we have in this bill is an opportunity to put in a framework so there is certainty for all parties, so they understand time frames, they understand how decision processes will be made, they understand their appeal rights, and they understand what can occur. That, to me, is why this bill is far superior to anything we have seen from the Katter's Australian Party. What the Katter's Australian Party uses this parliament for is nothing more than stunts when it comes to private members' bills. It is an abuse of the parliamentary process when they bring in a private member's bill that does not, nor could it, deliver the outcomes that it espouses for the people of Queensland. This bill is far more mature and advanced and will deliver for all of Queensland in these areas.

The tabling of the draft regulation by the Deputy Premier is indeed welcome. In fact, the appearance of the Deputy Premier before the committee was not only welcome but also set, I believe, a standard for parliamentary committees to look to. We do not expect that ministers will appear before parliamentary committees at all times, but where there is significant legislation about which there is concern I would encourage all ministers to use the parliamentary committee process and be willing to appear before it, as the Deputy Premier and his staff were. We thank him for that opportunity. What that enabled the committee and the very interested stakeholders to do was raise concerns that had been brought forward by various people and direct them directly to the responsible minister. I do not believe in my time in parliament we have ever seen that type of approach. It is one that bodes well for parliamentary democracy in Queensland.

I want to thank all those who gave their time and their energy to make a submission to the parliamentary committee. I want to thank those who made supplementary submissions and those who were able to appear before the committee. I thank those in Toowoomba who made their time available and those here in Brisbane also. As I have said, I thank Greg Chemello and his staff within the department. I genuinely want to thank them for their professional engagement with the committee. As a committee, we work with various departments. I do not mind putting on the record that the department of state development is by far the easiest to work with when it comes to soliciting information and answering the committee's concerns. From time to time I do not believe other departments and public servants understand that the committee process is separate from executive government. We are here in part representing the parliament so we work in a bipartisan way. I think all members of our committee will attest to that. When we genuinely ask questions, we are looking for genuine answers. To the departmental staff, you are a pleasure to work with and I thank you for that.

I want to put on the record our thanks to our secretariat staff because they work particularly hard. I know that all committee staff do, but we are fortunate that our committee staff are led by our very competent and capable research director, Erin Pasley. I thank our other staff involved as well. Our job as committee members is made that much easier thanks to their professionalism and their ability to address our concerns and pull that information together.

Through the process of looking at this bill, I believe we have seen a new standard for parliamentary processes whereby we not only listen to stakeholders but also address their concerns, and that is reflected in the amendments before the House tonight. In contrast, we have the Katter's Australian Party's bill—the Protection of Prime Agricultural Land and Other Land from Coal Seam Gas Mining Bill. I listened to the member for Condamine's second reading speech. I heard him speak about loopholes, but he then failed to actually identify any. I heard him speak about conspiracy theories and I was waiting for some of the clangers, but again he failed to actually address any of the real concerns. Despite his time in this parliament, he showed a pathetic lack of understanding of the parliamentary process. Regulation is not brought into the House at the same time that a bill is presented before the House. That to me just highlights the risks that we would face in Queensland if the Katter party was ever taken seriously.

I contrast the member for Condamine to the member for Mount Isa—an individual who I have great respect for, an individual who was able to work within our committee process and put forward his concerns in a statement of reservation in a measured way. The member for Condamine would have us believe that the Katter party inserted a dissenting report—his criticism was so scathing of this bill—but that is not the fact. The fact is that there was a statement of reservation which highlighted concerns—and they were legitimate concerns from the member for Mount Isa—but it misrepresents the good work that the member for Mount Isa has done when the member for Condamine comes into this House and represents his views as being the way in which the Katter's Australian Party had concerns about this legislation.

I note that the member for Condamine did not appear before the committee in its public hearings—and we did extend an invitation to him through his electorate office—nor did he seek leave to join the committee at any stage in the parliamentary process. That is exactly the same approach he took with the Gasfields Commission Bill. We extended to him an invitation to attend the hearings and he did not bother to turn up. Someone who is supposedly that concerned and who stands up in this House to make speeches and rants and raves and carries on can never be taken seriously if he is not involved in the parliamentary committee process, and the standing orders provide him with the opportunity to be involved.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr GIBSON:** I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer because it is hard work for all of the committee members, and if you are not up to it you cannot come into this House and complain about it afterwards. The contrast could not be greater. The Katter bill fails the test for effective legislation. The government's bill not only passes that test but passes the process in which the parliamentary committee has engaged with the broader community and presented recommendations back to the parliament and the executive has then adopted those recommendations as amendments to bring forth. No-one could ever accuse this government of not listening to the people of Queensland because this bill shows how very effectively we have done that. I commend the Regional Planning Interests Bill to the House.