




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (10.11 pm): I, too, rise to add to the cognate debate of these two bills. I would like to start by thanking those who briefed the committee, provided submissions and participated in the inquiry. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Deputy Premier and his department. As the member for Mackay said, it was a very important part of the committee process to have the minister there to answer questions, because we had lots of questions about this bill. We had received lots of feedback from various people on all sides of this bill. It was great to have the Deputy Premier there to give us that direct feedback. So I congratulate him on that.

The bill provides the ability to manage the impact of resource activities and regulated activities in areas of regional interest that contribute or are likely to contribute to Queensland's economic, social and environmental prosperity. The Queensland government is preparing new generation regional plans that address critical issues affecting the state's regions. These plans identify and contain land use policies that protect areas of regional interest such as priority agricultural areas, priority living areas, strategic environmental areas and the strategic cropping area.

This bill is all about balance and co-existence. These critical issues have been identified in consultation with the community. After all, over 99 submissions were formally made to the committee's inquiry. Yesterday in parliament the Premier said that we want to—

... drive new job opportunities for Queenslanders.

...

Queensland is Australia's engine room for economic growth and we are open for business.

The Regional Planning Interests Bill will deliver on the LNP's commitment to protect prime agricultural land and resolve land use conflicts where they arise. The assessment process established by this bill restores the balance of power and provides certainty for rural producers and resource companies when new mining or gas developments are proposed. By ensuring the ongoing development of both the agriculture and the resource industries, the government will ensure ongoing growth in jobs and opportunities.

This bill is framework legislation with specific assessment criteria provided by way of regulation. The bill introduces a new system of regional planning across all of Queensland, with regional plans for Central Queensland and the Darling Downs already in place and the Cape York Regional Plan in draft form. The bill introduces four areas of regional interest: priority agricultural areas—and an example of those are the Darling Downs and the Central Highlands; a strategic cropping area, which is currently identified within the Strategic Cropping Land Act and I note that that act will be repealed; priority living areas, which are areas around all towns and urban or semi-urban areas; and strategic environmental

areas. Some examples of that would be the Channel Country and the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve on Cape York.

The bill will require any new regulated development in areas of regional interest to obtain a regional impact development approval—known as an RIDA. The bill requires all new resource industry development in an area of regional interest to obtain an RIDA. Other new development prescribed by regulation that is potentially incompatible with the area of regional interest may also require an RIDA. Development agreed to or carried out by private landowners that impacts only on their own land will be exempt from the requirement to obtain an RIDA.

An RIDA, if granted, will be an approval to have an impact on an area of regional interest and allow controls to be placed on that impact. An RIDA will allow a range of conditions or restrictions to be applied to any new development to control its impact on the area of regional interest. An RIDA will be very similar to a development approval that has been used for many years to control inappropriate urban development.

The next step was to publish the assessment criteria. I congratulate the Deputy Premier on tabling those tonight. There are some very clear points in that criteria that will flow through to regulation. That assessment criteria sets out the assessment criteria for each of the areas of regional interest. The assessment for a priority agricultural area is very straightforward. The basis of this assessment will be that the activity must not result in material impacts on a priority agricultural land use of a property. So it has to comply with a whole list of criteria that the Deputy Premier has tabled for us tonight. For instance, that activity cannot be located elsewhere on the land that is not used for a priority agricultural land use. It cannot result in the loss of more than two per cent of the land used for a priority agricultural land use and the loss of more than two per cent of the productive capacity of a priority agricultural land use. As the member for Nanango said, that is common sense.

Basically, this assessment criteria says, 'If you haven't negotiated a compensation and conduct agreement that would give you an exemption from having to have a regional interest declaration, then you have to go through the process of having a look to see where you can put those particular pieces of infrastructure that are required for a coal seam gas facility and have a look to see if you can stick it over in a corner somewhere or off the particular cropping land that might be being used or, if it is a cattle property, maybe where the cattle are not. Stick it in a corner and keep it out of the way of the farmer who is carrying on his business.' That is common sense.

The other criteria is that, if land can be found, no more than two per cent of the land can be taken. That is a very small part of somebody's land. They still have 98 per cent of it left. That allows for co-existence between the agricultural sector and the mining sector. I have to agree with the member for Nanango: it is common sense.

The committee has made 22 recommendations. One of those is that the bill be passed. There are 21 others. The Deputy Premier has told us that he will accept the majority of those with some conditions. There are also 16 points of clarification and he is going to give us some feedback on those. I will be supporting this bill tonight.

I would now like to move on to the other bill that is part of this cognate debate tonight, the Protection of Prime Agricultural Land and Other Land from Coal Seam Gas Mining Bill 2013.

Where do you start with this bill? It is absolutely ridiculous. Queensland is in a bad financial state. We cannot go cutting our own throat by bringing in this sort of legislation. I cannot impress enough on people how bad even talking about this is. This bill proposes to extinguish coal seam gas exploration and mining rights for coal seam gas companies and other businesses with connected operations without compensation or consideration of the consequences. If that is not a threat to the economic viability of this state I do not know what is. We cannot do something like that. I think if one looked up 'sovereign risk' in the dictionary there would probably be a picture of the member for Condamine under the definition.

This bill would undermine the substantial investment in CSG infrastructure that has been put in place in this state already. This bill is absolutely ridiculous and we cannot support it. It proposes to exclude CSG activities from one part of the state while ignoring the rest of the state such as the Central Highlands where there is prime agricultural land and CSG activity co-existing as we speak. In fact, what it aims to do is prohibit all coal seam gas and exploration mining activities east of the Condamine River from Chinchilla to the New South Wales border and from a longitudinal line running directly through the Chinchilla Post Office east to the coast. I am sure that the people who operate the Chinchilla Post Office—I do not know them personally—are happy to know they will not be having a coal seam gas well in the middle of their post office or, in fact, any sort of exploration at all. That must be of great comfort to them, but it is absolutely terrifying to the mining industry in this state.

We cannot support this bill. This whole bill is premised on flawed assumptions that coal seam gas activities and prime agricultural land are incompatible and mutually exclusive. For areas where prime agricultural land has been verified as not being strategic cropping land, CSG activities would still be excluded. I will not support this bill.

The member for Condamine mentioned that the Deputy Premier had not given us a definition of co-existence. If he had bothered to read the report of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee, recommendation 4 recommends to the Deputy Premier that he talks to the people who gave input to our committee about a definition of co-existence. There is plenty of evidence, if one looks, that co-existence works. It is a viable alternative and it is one that I fully support. But I will not support the bill brought before the House by the member for Condamine.