




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.22 pm): Firstly I thank my colleagues for allowing me to make this brief contribution on this bill. I rise to speak in support of the Regional Planning Interests Bill 2013, which demonstrates this government's commitment to providing a sensible strategic approach to land use planning in Queensland. The issue of managing land use is central to our economic, environmental and social wellbeing. So I welcome the intent of this legislation to provide a clear framework for managing the interests of growth, development, conservation, the environment, agriculture and resources in areas of regional interest.

As a result of this extensive consultation, I note that the committee's report includes a long list of recommendations and points for clarification, and I applaud the Deputy Premier for his response to the committee's report in which the government has agreed to accept all 22 of the recommendations either in full or in principle. This represents community consultation at its best. Personally, I have observed with interest the conflicts over land use that have arisen in the past in regions such as the Darling Downs and Central Queensland. With resource exploration activity in my electorate also on the increase, I am very mindful of the fact that any conflicts need to be carefully managed, taking into account the interests of all stakeholders from a long-term point of view.

On a daily basis we all receive phone calls, emails, letters and visits to our offices to discuss potential land use conflicts. I am sure all my colleagues have had much the same experience. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions made recently by Ken and Paula Outzen from Yandaran, Estelle and Bod Poulsen, Lorraine Heyes and Vicki Perrin from Avondale and Winfield on behalf of concerned residents. The consistent issue raised has been their concerns around protecting priority agricultural areas and priority living areas. 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.

In acknowledging their concerns, it is important that we share the significance of the opportunities in this bill, particularly the strategic environmental areas. The region will benefit from the opportunities that are now available under this government to protect pristine areas in the electorate, areas like Baffle Creek and Kolan River. They are just some areas that may be reviewed under this legislation. The towns of Winfield, Avondale and others on our delicate coastal strips with important artesian basins all should have and will have an interest in the strength of this legislation.

I remind the constituents with an interest in regional planning issues that they now have, under this government, with this legislation, four key areas of regional interest: priority agricultural areas, strategic cropping area, priority living areas and strategic environmental areas. I remind those constituents and other stakeholders of what is required before approvals are considered. Any new

regulated development in areas of regional interest will need a regional impact development approval, known as a RIDA.

Further enhancements include priority agricultural land use assessment criteria. This ensures that any activity must not result in material impact at the property level and at the regional level. It should be stated that the landowners are in a stronger position. This empowers landowners and deals with underground water management. This legislation will provide the people in the Burnett electorate with a greater degree of certainty when it comes to what can and cannot be done on land—that is, in areas of regional interest. In particular, it gives effect to regional plans which are designed to not only ensure long-term sustainable land use but also empower landowners and give them certainty. When we talk of landowners, I add that I support the recommendation by the committee to include pastoral leaseholders under the definition of 'owners'.

The regional plans that are currently being rolled out identify and include long-term land use policies that protect areas of regional interest. Such areas include priority agricultural areas, priority living areas and strategic environmental areas. This bill also expands on those areas of regional interest by identifying strategic cropping areas and integrating the objectives of the Strategic Cropping Act 2011 and thereby reducing unnecessary duplication.

With the process of regional planning now underway, it makes sense to pass this bill, which will manage the impact of resource and other regulated activities in those areas of regional interest. One of the committee's recommendations was to develop a definition of co-existence or co-existence criteria relevant to each area of regional interest. I agree with the committee that this would enhance the ability of both landowners and resource companies to arrive at a mutually beneficial outcome and provide clarification for all involved. I look forward to seeing this recommendation implemented.

A resource activity or other identified activity cannot occur in an area of regional interest unless a regional interest authority has been given. The process of obtaining an authority under the bill ensures that a comprehensive and effective assessment process will take place before any resource activities occur within an area of regional interest. It also allows for appeal by affected stakeholders such as a landowner. In some cases, certain aspects of an application may be referred to a third party such as a local government. Any conditions applied by the third party must then be added to the authority. These arrangements ensure that local planning schemes are able to work in conjunction with the new regional plans.

As the Deputy Premier said when introducing this bill, the introduction of land use planning to Queensland is a new concept but it is a necessary concept because we all now face challenges that we have never had to face in the past on such a wide scale. We have always promised to deliver a stable four-pillar economy to the people of Queensland. Taking positive steps towards ensuring that sectors such as resources and agriculture are able to co-exist is clearly a vital part of being able to deliver on that promise.

I sum up by thanking the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and the committee. Again, I thank my colleagues for their indulgence this afternoon in allowing me to make a small contribution to this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.