




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.52 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015. I was not going to. I was not intending to speak to the bill today, because I thought that, finally, we might have a situation in Queensland where both sides of politics could take a bipartisan approach to managing and protecting what has to be the world's, the nation's, this state's most precious environmental asset, the Great Barrier Reef. That had been my hope—that we could have had true bipartisan support for something as precious as the Great Barrier Reef. Unfortunately, what I heard this morning compelled me to rise to make a short contribution, because what I heard again was those opposite choosing to politicise the Great Barrier Reef for no other benefit than their own political gain. Yet again, we heard another case of Labor revisionists trying to rewrite history, trying to take the credit for the hard yards, as the member for Clayfield said, that were done under the LNP government of the last three years.

I want to reflect on a couple of things that the member for Callide said. It does require a bit of a history lesson. When we came into power in March 2012, I recall the member for Callide referring to the spaghetti of mines, railway lines and ports that were proposed to be developed across this state of Queensland. Basically, put a mine out in western Queensland and draw a line to the coast. Yet under the Labor government of Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh, you could pretty much be guaranteed that you could build a new port or you could expand an existing port. In terms of resource development, rail corridors and port development in this state, there was no planned approach to what was going on.

We also had this concept that we have heard the Deputy Premier speak of about not disposing dredge spoil in the World Heritage area. Why were we in this situation in the first place? The only ones who had been doing it were those opposite. They did it in Gladstone and that is what drew the attention of UNESCO in the first place. Not only that, they also failed to mention to UNESCO that they were going to be building three LNG plants on Curtis Island but they intended to dispose of dredge spoil at Abbot Point. Anyone who wants to try to rewrite the history of the Great Barrier Reef and what we have done to protect it here in this state needs to be reminded that in March 2012 the existing plan for Abbot Point would have seen 35 million cubic metres of sediment disposed of adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef. The members opposite were going to create another island in the Great Barrier Reef.

It was not the Labor Party, it was not this government that took the necessary steps to address those very genuine concerns of UNESCO and it certainly did not happen in the nine months since January this year. As the member for Callide mentioned, there were two long years of developing a strategic assessment. Initially, that process started with the then federal minister, Tony Burke. I recall, like the member for Callide does, some rather robust but in the end very positive discussions around how we could progress this issue and get the best outcome for the Great Barrier Reef. Those discussions continued with the new federal environment minister, Greg Hunt. For two years we worked on the reef 2050 report that the member for Clayfield referred to. As the member for Callide mentioned, all of that culminated in November last year with the introduction of the Ports Bill.

When it comes to the reef, I think it is important that Queenslanders also hear the LNP's legacy. Faced with what we had in Gladstone, we established the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership—a partnership of community, environmental and Indigenous groups and industry all sitting around the table restoring confidence for the people locally, across our state, across our nation and, indeed, across the world when it comes to our management of that crucial port. We expanded that process further and recently there was the release of the first report card for the Mackay-Whitsunday water area. That was an initiative created under the LNP government. The eReefs, which the Minister for Environment crow's about, started under the LNP government. Perhaps one of my most pleasing achievements, in partnership with my then ministerial colleagues the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Toowoomba South, was the establishment of best management practice programs with our grazing and cane industries—working with them not against them to together provide economic benefit for our farmers and environmental protection for the reef.

I want to pick up some comments that were made by the Minister for Environment. He talked about hosting European ministers. The process took far more than that. It took trips to Europe by Minister Hunt and me to meet with people like Irina Bokova, Kishore Rao and Fannie Dubois. It took the hard yards of each and every departmental staff member who worked in either State Development or EHP over those last two years. Like the member for Callide, I acknowledge those. I also want to acknowledge the hard work of Ambassador George Mina in Paris, who spent many long hours working with the UNESCO ambassadors.

Those opposite say that they protect the environment. They produce glossy brochures and glib one-liners, but at the end of the day they never did. If you look at their track record, they gave hollow platitudes to the conservation groups. To protect the environment, you need to get the balance right. You need to do the hard yards. You need to make sure that you are backed by rigorous scientific evidence. You need to make sure that your legislative protections have the rigour to stand up in a court of law, have the rigour to ensure that you can provide economic benefit to this state so that not only my kids and my grandkids can have jobs but also my kids and my grandkids can enjoy the Great Barrier Reef. Anyone who suggests that I or anyone else on this side of politics does not want to protect the Great Barrier Reef is just off their rocker. No-one—no-one—is interested in destroying the Great Barrier Reef in this state. We need to take the politics out of the Great Barrier Reef and start working together to ensure that the next generations can thoroughly appreciate it as much as we have.