




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (12.29 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate of this bill. There are no ports in the electorate of Gregory; nevertheless, ports play a pivotal economic role in our region. The main ports servicing Gregory are Gladstone for the north and Brisbane for the south.

This bill covers the priority ports of Townsville, Abbot Point, Gladstone and Hay Point-Mackay, which represent trade worth about \$30 billion and shifted 77 per cent of the total throughput of all Queensland ports in 2013-14. It is easy to see how important these ports are to our economy. Gregory uses our ports for coal, one of the major exports out of the Bowen Basin to customers in South-East Asia; cotton, grain and pulses to our valuable Indian market; and the ever-expanding horticultural industry.

This bill needs to provide the flexibility to expand. That does not mean to the detriment of the Great Barrier Reef. I think everybody in this House—certainly those on this side of the House—believes that we need to protect the Great Barrier Reef, but regional Queensland certainly does have a growing economy. I believe that we are on the verge of enormous growth in our food and fibre exports to South-East Asia, so we need the flexibility to ensure our ports can cope with a potential increase in port activity.

Yesterday I listened to the member for Hinchinbrook articulate very well his argument and demonstrate his understanding of the issue. I thought the amendments he proposed were worthwhile. I also listened to the member for Callide, who has been very involved in this and is very passionate about getting this right. I certainly will not repeat what those members said, but I believe that they absolutely had the right intentions—to make sure we get right this piece of legislation relating to an important piece of infrastructure in the Queensland economy. We need to do that because Queensland is on the doorstep of South-East Asia, and our key access point to that area is our ports.

I have heard the views of the people of Cairns who believe that they need the opportunity to expand their economy. Their economy does rely on the tourism industry. When people think of Cairns they do think of the tourism industry, but the sugar industry there is also very valuable. The federal government is looking at Northern Australia for potential export opportunities in the ever-growing South-East Asian market. Cairns is in the area to take advantage of that. We needed to give Cairns some opportunities and some flexibility to increase their economy.

Finally, I thank the committee—chairman Jim Pearce, deputy chair Michael Hart and the members for Keppel, Gladstone and Dalrymple.