




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

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SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (12.32 pm): I rise to speak in support of the historic Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015. In doing so, I acknowledge the very hard and excellent work of the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Dr Lynham, and the Minister for the Great Barrier Reef, Dr Miles. I also pay tribute to the support over a long period of time, in the last term of parliament, of the Deputy Premier, who was at the forefront of the campaign to maintain the balance between protecting our reef and the environment and ensuring our economic future.

This bill will strike an important balance in that regard in terms of sustainable port development that also meets our national and international commitments to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. The Queensland and Australian governments jointly released the *Reef 2050 long-term sustainability plan* in March this year, in response to UNESCO's requirements about coastal development threatening the values of the Great Barrier Reef. Parts of the reef are undeniably under pressure. The Reef 2050 Plan is Australia's overarching framework for protecting and managing our great national and international icon over the next 50 years.

The bill represents a significant step in implementing our port related election commitments as set out in the Reef 2050 Plan. The bill will facilitate a number of important port activities, subject to appropriate environmental restrictions, and will maximise environmental outcomes in terms of protecting the reef. Importantly, it will ban the sea based disposal of port related capital dredge material into the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and restrict major capital dredging to four priority ports, being Abbot Point, Gladstone, Hay Point-Mackay and Townsville.

I can assure the member for Gregory that this bill means that development within Gladstone harbour can be undertaken, subject to relevant environmental approvals being obtained—for example, the further deepening of the existing Clinton Bypass Channel, which is required to ensure the continued safe passage of vessels including larger, capesize vessels. As it is a capital dredging project, dredge material will be disposed of on land, most likely at the existing Western Basin bund area at Fisherman's Landing. I note what a terrific job the new chair of the Gladstone Ports Corporation, Leo Zussino, is doing. I think it is a sad day when the member for Callide just cannot help himself and vilifies somebody who has contributed an enormous amount to the Gladstone area's economic development over 20 years. Development and maintenance of export facilities—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr BAILEY: I hear a bit of a buzz-saw. I am not sure where it is coming from. Development and maintenance of export facilities at the ports of Hay Point and Abbot Point will also continue under the bill, subject to relevant environmental approvals being obtained.

In late October 2015 the North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation, which is responsible for these ports, released its *Sustainability plan 2015+*. The plan outlines North Queensland Bulk Ports' approach

to sustainability. The plan will also form a key platform for future business activities of the port. I welcome its release.

Development will also be allowed to proceed at the port of Townsville, which is a vital and strategic trading port of North Queensland. As I announced earlier this week, the tender for supply and construction of Townsville's berth 4 redevelopment project is currently open for submissions. The upgrade of berth 4 is of significant economic importance for the port of Townsville as well as the region and will facilitate access for larger, Panamax size vessels. Work will kick off in early 2016, involving a substantial number of local new jobs for the Townsville economy, with the new upgraded facility expected to commence operations late in 2017.

Another important project for Townsville is the proposed port expansion project, which involves construction of a number of additional berths and construction of a new outer harbour necessary to accommodate the port's forecast long-term trade increases. The port's CEO, Raneé Crosby, pitched this project at last week's very successful Northern Queensland Economic Summit in Cairns. There were about 280 attendees present.

As Minister Lynham has outlined, there has been significant consultation undertaken about the future regulation of development at the port of Cairns. I acknowledge his excellent work in that regard. I am pleased that the port of Cairns will be provided with the flexibility it needs to develop within specified parameters, as set out in proposed amendments to the bill.

The bill also provides Ports North with the opportunity to continue working with state and federal government agencies to recalibrate its environmental impact statement for the Cairns Shipping Development Project to involve incremental channelled works that support the growth of the Cairns region. The Palaszczuk government recognises that the port of Cairns supports economic activity at a regional level and is a key component of the North Queensland tourism industry. I note the 70,000 jobs up and down the reef that are dependent upon environmental protection.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area while allowing sustainable development, consistent with the Reef 2050 Plan and our commitments to UNESCO earlier this year. The balance struck by this bill is critical to the future of Queensland.

I welcome the constructive approach taken by both business and environmental groups in engaging with us on this bill. Last week in Cairns I had the great pleasure of standing up with Minister Lynham, the lead minister on this. We were joined there by WWF. Half an hour later I sat down with the CEO of the Cairns Chamber of Commerce. Both of them were very supportive of our approach of not only protecting the environment but also protecting our economy.

This is one of the great differences between this government and the opposition and one of the defining issues in terms of the recent election campaign. It is our view that protecting the environment is an essential part of economic development. You have to have both of them. This is the 21st century. It is old thinking—it is 20th century thinking—to be running around saying, 'You should do over the environment and the economy is the only parameter.' There is not an issue that is clearer than this and there is no clearer issue of policy failure than the opposition's mishandling of this issue when it was in power. It thought economic development could come at the price of doing over the Caley Valley Wetlands. That is what it thought. That is why it paid the price. That is why it is in opposition, because it could not get the balance right. It is absolutely critical that in protecting the environment we also protect our economy and the 70,000 jobs that depend on the Great Barrier Reef, and let us hope, given our very progressive position on this, that there will be more tourists coming to Queensland. I note the work of the Minister for Tourism in that regard. We are positioning ourselves well for a revival of tourism in Queensland and the reef is going to be a very important part of that equation, especially with the Australian dollar back down around 70 cents. The attraction for us to get a new wave of tourism in Queensland, particularly environmental tourism, is very important. If we get that right, those tourists and their relatives and their friends will be coming back and coming back and coming back to Queensland for many years to come. So let us not trade-off the environment. Let us not get into the false dichotomy of trading off the environment for the economy. It is short-term thinking. It is 20th century thinking. It is a clear example of the failure of the previous government. That is why it is in opposition; that is why it is not on this side of the chamber. It does not understand that the community demands that of any modern government. They expect them to get that balance right.

In closing, I want to thank all of those ordinary Queenslanders who fought hard and who campaigned for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef. I want to thank those environment groups who led those campaigns but particularly those hundreds of thousands of ordinary Queenslanders who signed petitions, who lobbied local newspapers and lobbied local MPs, who were vocal about protecting their icon. I want to thank every single one of them. This is a great outcome. This is not only an outcome that is great for the reef but also a great outcome for their courage and their persistence in standing up

for something they care deeply about. This is a win for the people of Queensland and it is the right policy position. We are getting the balance right between protecting the economy and protecting the environment. I commend the bill to the House.