




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (5.11 pm): I rise to also oppose the motion of the member for Hinchinbrook, which seeks to defer consideration of this very important bill. I rise to oppose it because we on this side of the House and I as minister for the Great Barrier Reef will do what needs to be done to protect the reef. We will stand in support of the 69,000 Queenslanders who rely on the reef for their livelihoods. We will stand and defend the very substantial economic contribution that the reef makes to our state.

As it stands, this bill is a very sensible outcome and I commend the minister for his efforts. It is a sensible outcome that should be dealt with today. I commend the Cairns business community and the conservation organisations that have worked with the minister to get this bill to a state where we can consider it tonight. This bill demonstrates our commitment to UNESCO to protect the Great Barrier Reef and it demonstrates to the people of Queensland that we on this side of the House will implement our commitments. We will do what we said we would do at the election, and that is introduce a sustainable ports bill. The bill should be passed today, because it has been through the appropriate process: it has been to the committee, the public has been consulted, the initiatives in the bill were in the long-term sustainability plan and, as the minister said, we committed to passing the bill by the end of 2015.

The member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Clayfield have given no good reason why Queensland should say to the international community that our word is worthless. They have given no good reason why we should not implement our commitments. I stood at the World Heritage Committee meeting with the Deputy Premier and the Commonwealth environment minister, Minister Hunt. I stood there when we repeated those commitments to the member countries. They took us at our word and they agreed not to list the Great Barrier Reef as in danger. I will never forget when the Deputy Premier said that Queenslanders love the reef; they love the reef so much they elected a government to protect it. And there was applause—the first applause of the World Heritage Committee meeting.

Let us not forget that just a few months ago we learnt the extent that those opposite went to in an attempt to hoodwink the Queensland community into believing that they actually cared about the reef. We learnt about their \$2.5 million Reef Facts campaign and the hundreds of thousands of dollars they spent on polling and research. We now know that that polling told them that the people of Queensland did not trust them when it came to the reef. The people of Queensland are pretty smart; they should not have trusted them and they were right not to trust them. They were right not to trust them because, on the one hand, the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Clayfield walk in here and say, 'This was our bill.' Let us not forget that the member for Callide interjected when the minister introduced this bill to say that it was his. So on the one hand this is their bill, but on the other hand they oppose it. On the one hand they introduced it last year, but on the other hand they do not want to debate it until next year. On the one hand you have the Leader of the Opposition tweeting that the UNESCO decision was recognition of all of his good work, but on the other hand they do not want

to do what the long-term sustainability plan—the plan that they claim was theirs—committed them and us to doing. It was right of the people of Queensland to not trust the LNP. Their research and polling on that point was good.

I nearly fell off my chair a little while ago when the member for Clayfield stood and talked about evidence based policy. That is a notion that was foreign to them for three years, but now they are all interested in evidence based policy. The member for Hinchinbrook wanted to see the science, which is something that he was never interested in as the minister for natural resources. Here is the evidence: dredge spoil, especially capital dredge spoil, can travel great distances. Dredge spoil clouds the water, blocking light that is important to creatures that need light to survive. In addition, the sediment itself settles on coral and seagrass, literally suffocating them. The turbidity caused by the dumping of capital dredge spoil directly affects tourism operators. One only needs to talk to a dive operator and hear what turbidity means for their business to know how important it is that we debate and pass this bill. The dredging itself re-enlivens sediments and nutrients that had otherwise settled, doubling their impact. Once that sediment settles, storms can whip it up again, increasing all of those impacts.

The people of Queensland were right not to trust the LNP on the reef. Their behaviour today only serves to reinforce why the people were right not to trust them. As the Minister for the Great Barrier Reef and as a member of a government elected on a platform to protect the reef, I am opposing this amendment. When we are successful, we will support the passing of this bill today.