



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL, REPORTING DATE**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (11.27 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Deputy Premier. There is an urgent need for a responsible vegetation framework in Queensland. I oppose the amendment moved by the opposition to extend the committee's reporting date to 30 June. They cannot see the forest for the trees because they cleared them all. There is nothing else there.

The Palaszczuk government is taking a considered approach to implementing sensible laws that balance environmental protection with responsible rural industry practices. I grew up in North Queensland on farms. I have family who live on farms. I love North Queensland. There is this big thing off the coast called the Great Barrier Reef. I will talk about that in a moment. I know that those opposite do not care about that. I refer to the hypocrisy of those on the other side of the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! The member is using unparliamentary language. I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr HARPER:** I withdraw, but I would like to deal—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** I would like to move on to the hypocrisy I have heard from those on the other side.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No. I asked the member to desist from using unparliamentary language.

**Mr HARPER:** I withdraw. I will talk about consultation. Those on the other side of the House demonstrated during the last term of government that they do not consult. They passed laws in the dead of night in a matter of hours.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I realise that this is a heated debate, but many members of this House either have had or will have an opportunity to speak, so let us just try to allow each speaker to have their say in a reasonable level of silence.

**Mr HARPER:** The member for Callide said that we are stealing the future of landholders. I say that, if we do not take urgent action, we are stealing the future of all Queenslanders. We need to address this issue. The bill will not destroy agriculture in this state.

**Mr WATTS:** I rise to a point of order. The member is directly referring to the bill, which we are not debating. We are debating the motion.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for that. There has been some leeway in all the rulings tonight. Everyone is getting a little bit of time to talk about it and then I am ready to ask every single member then to move on.

**Mr HARPER:** Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for that latitude. The bill will not destroy agriculture in this state, as those opposite hysterically claim. Under the Beattie and Bligh governments, agriculture flourished.

Tonight, the member for Southern Downs claimed that this bill will tear apart farming communities. Landholders will be able to continue to manage their properties and address significant issues such as controlling non-native plants and declared pests. That practice will not change. In late 2013, a number of changes were made.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I ask the member for Thuringowa to be sure that he talks about the matter at hand.

**Mr HARPER:** I believe that there was a major backward step in vegetation in Queensland.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** No, of course I was not. Let us not forget that, in 2012, the former member for Ashgrove looked Queenslanders in the eye and promised that he would keep Labor's sensible—

**Miss BARTON:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker himself made a ruling earlier in this debate about the need to be strictly relevant to the amendment that is before the House—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Broadwater.

**Miss BARTON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am simply seeking to finish putting my point of order, if I may.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** And I will ask the member for Broadwater to show respect for the chair in the way she addresses the chair. You may finish your point.

**Miss BARTON:** Absolutely. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have absolute respect for the chair. Mr Speaker made a ruling tonight. He was very specific that the debate tonight must be relevant to the amendment as moved by the manager of opposition business. I ask that you ask that the member for Thuringowa follow Mr Speaker's ruling that has been the guideline for the rest of this debate and that the member for Thuringowa be relevant to the amendment as moved by the manager of opposition business.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Broadwater. I have the chair at this point in time. I have shown respect to Mr Speaker's ruling and I will continue to do so and I do not need your advice on how to observe Mr Speaker's ruling. However, I do not want to repeat my warning to the member for Thuringowa to remain speaking to the matter at hand. If he is not able to offer any further points that address the amendment, then he may resume his seat.

**Mr HARPER:** I would just like to finish by saying that I know this is an emotive issue. There is a sense of urgency to get it right. I believe that the process that we are following is certainly the right track. I will just take out the emotive—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** If the member is going to be speaking to the matter of timing—

**Mr HARPER:** Yes, I understand that. Those opposite have demonstrated that they have not evolved from the 20th century. There is a sense of urgency in protecting our reef and getting this land clearing vegetation legislation through the House as quickly as possible. Have the members opposite heard of the Kyoto protocol? It is simply unacceptable not to act. It is unacceptable that all of those hundreds of thousands of hectares have been cleared. The bill will not destroy agriculture in this state. Those opposite continue to hysterically claim that it will, but it will not.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. I will ask the member to resume his seat.