




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

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

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.29 am): I am pleased to rise this morning to speak in support of the amendment moved by the member for Mermaid Beach late last night. I want to list a handful of reasons the amendment needs to be passed and we need to give the committee sufficient time to consider this bill in all of its detail. As a lead-in, I want to state that one of the proudest moments of my life was to serve this state as its environment minister for three years. I am passionate about the environment—incredibly passionate. I have five children who I want to leave a legacy to, and I want to make sure that legacy is better than the one I was left. I do not believe that to protect the environment you take a hands-off approach. You have to be stewards of the environment, you have to care for the environment, you have to be in there getting your hands dirty looking after it.

I want to pick up on a comment made by the member for Thuringowa earlier this evening when he said that this side cannot see the forest for the trees. I invite the member for Thuringowa—through you, Madam Deputy Speaker Farmer—to come to the electorate of Glass House, and indeed I invite the member for South Brisbane to join him. We will go for a drive along Bellthorpe Range Road and I will explain that on one side of the road is a national park and on the other side is a state forest, and I will ask them to choose which is which. I can guarantee that both of them will select the state forest as being the national park. Why? Because it is pristine. Why? Because for centuries it has been under the stewardship of the people of Glass House in a sustainable way, harvesting timber to provide for our housing, our paper and everything that we use—even the wood in this chamber where we stand here tonight. On the other side of the road is a quagmire. It is a pest and weed-ridden national park. Why? Because for far too long we have taken a hands-off approach to the environment.

Let me tell the House why we need to give the committee the time it needs to review this legislation. My first reason is that the minister himself promised a round table that included all peak groups that would be impacted by this legislation. The member for Nicklin himself said earlier this evening that that round table had broken down because the environmental groups had blackmailed the government into introducing this legislation before anything else could be considered. Mr Speaker also said that the groups—whether they be AgForce or the environmental groups—have all said that they are willing to participate in a committee process. They had seen elements of the legislation here tonight, but they are willing to participate in a committee process. Let us give them that chance. Let us give them the full chance to present their cases to a committee for more than 19 business days over Easter.

My second reason is in the explanatory notes to the bill and it comes from the government itself. Let me use their words. Under the heading 'Consultation', the explanatory notes state—

Limited consultation was undertaken in the development of the Reinstatement Bill. No consultation—

and I repeat: no consultation—

was undertaken in relation to the changes to the Environmental Offsets Act.

I know how long it took to develop that Environmental Offsets Act. I know how much consultation it took to deliver that Environmental Offsets Act. I know how much disagreement there was and how much negotiation was required around the Environmental Offsets Act, some of it with my good friend the member for Callide. If we are going to make changes—and it says here that no consultation has occurred to date—then we need to give those who are affected the opportunity to have their say through the committee process.

My third reason—and I note the member for Noosa picked up on this point, although it has been missed by many—is that there are changes to the Sustainable Planning Act in this legislation. Who is affected by the Sustainable Planning Act? Our local governments. Guess what? Our local governments are going to an election on Saturday. We do not know which mayors and which councils will be elected and indeed which approach any of our councils will be taking after Saturday. The government is going to be giving them fewer than 19 days to get their submissions in on what is happening with the Sustainable Planning Act.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr POWELL: I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. In the case of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council, they are going to have to wait longer for the outcome of that council election and they are going to be asked to put in a submission in that time, in a matter of days, so the committee can consider it.

My fourth reason is that, contrary to what the member for Noosa said, this is not just about regional and rural Queensland; this is about South-East Queensland. The changes that this legislation brings in are not revisions or reversions to changes the LNP made; they go a lot further. One of those changes is the inclusion of the Burnett-Mary catchment. I am sorry, but that is not rural and regional Queensland; that is Glass House. That is the communities of Cambroon, Conondale, Harper Creek and Kidaman Creek, and Obi which is in the Speaker's electorate of Nicklin. It is the communities of Montville, Maleny and North Maleny in the electorate of Glass House. As the member for Noosa rightly said, they are going to wake up this morning and have no idea that they have been completely blindsided by this government—that all of a sudden legislation that previously only related to areas in my good friend the member for Hinchinbrook's communities is now going to apply to them. The government is considering giving them 19 days to wake up to that fact, to get their contributions in and to have their say on that committee. That is outrageous.

My fifth reason was stated by the member for Hinchinbrook in his opening comments this evening. The community, all of Queensland, require time to consider the campaign of deceit that has already commenced. The member for Hinchinbrook went to great lengths using the SLATS report to point out the kind of deception that is being used by ministers of this government and by environmental groups around this state.

Let me give the House another one because it was used in the lead-up to this announcement. I caught a glimpse of a TV news broadcast regarding koala habitat in this state and a press release put out by the WWF. The WWF suggested that under the LNP government the koala habitat around the state had been destroyed. The problem is that the methodology the WWF used was flawed. They assumed that the koala was considered endangered across the length and breadth of Queensland under the LNP because that is the only way you can trigger an essential habitat map across the entire state. Sorry, but the koala was only listed as endangered in South-East Queensland. The only essential habitat maps in Queensland were in South-East Queensland so any suggestion that habitat was destroyed outside of South-East Queensland is purely false and nothing more than deception. The people of Queensland need to understand through this committee process that they are being deceived. They need the opportunity to hear the true facts and make up their own minds about what this legislation actually entails.

My final reason that this amendment to the original motion should be agreed to is that for all of this week—in fact, for months—we have been hearing from the Palaszczuk Labor government that it is all about jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs. Let us be honest. This bill is not about jobs at all; this is all about destroying jobs the length and breadth of this great state. The committee must have the time to consider exactly how many jobs are going to go as a result of this legislation potentially being passed. To suggest that that can be done in 19 days is farcical. The committee needs the time to completely understand the economic impacts and job impacts of this legislation so that committee members can inform this House so that we can have a truthful and honest debate about the merits of this legislation or otherwise. To do that, the committee needs more than 19 days. Therefore, I support the member for Mermaid Beach's amendment and I call on all members of this House to do the same.