




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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## **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.44 pm): I rise this afternoon to support the shadow minister and oppose the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. At the outset, I encourage constituents of the electorate of Glass House, and Queenslanders in general, who want to gain a full understanding of this piece of legislation and how it gets the balance wrong to read two things. The first is the speech delivered last night by the shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps MP. The second is the committee's report, and particularly the statement of reservation put in by the deputy chair, the member for Gympie, Tony Perrett MP, which starts on page 61 of the report. Unfortunately, the 10 minutes that I have been allotted this afternoon do not allow me to do similar justice to this bill. Instead I will focus on some of the aspects that relate particularly to the Glass House electorate.

Let me say that I support environmental protection. I am very proud of the legacy of the three years I served this state as the minister for environment. I am proud of the purchase of land that we made, particularly that Labor is now claiming credit for, in aggregating protected area estates around the state. I am proud of the land we bought in South-East Queensland to rehabilitate for koalas and also protect other endangered species and to get the best outcome possible in those blocks of land. I spoke previously of one of those—the 126 hectares at Crohamhurst, which I visited Monday week ago, which we are protecting for not only koalas but also Coxen's fig parrot, glossy black cockatoos and the Richmond birdwing butterfly. I am proud of the fact that a couple of weeks ago I was able to stand with two constituents and celebrate 10 years of the Glass House Mountains being listed on the national Heritage Register.

I say to the people of Glass House, to the people in this chamber and to the people in all of Queensland that I want to eat Australian beef—no, Queensland beef. I want to use Queensland sugar in my cooking. I want to eat Queensland strawberries and Queensland pineapples. As our population grows, I do not want to import more and more foodstuffs. I want us to be able to feed ourselves, and we can. We can if we have sensible, well-balanced vegetation management laws. If we do not, if we go over the top and get the balance wrong, we will cruel our agricultural industry and end up importing produce from nations with far poorer environmental standards. I would prefer the sensible clearing of regrowth in Queensland to allow for sugar production, rather than the hypocrisy of buying sugar from Brazil produced through clear-felling of virgin, remnant Amazonian rainforest.

Sensible, well-balanced vegetation management laws are what the LNP achieved when in government. All remnant vegetation remained protected unless it was subject to a small list of exemptions, such as building a house, or was assessed and granted a permit such as for high-value agriculture or for routine management under a self-assessable code. A key element of our reforms was

the new permit for high-value agriculture to sustainably grow Queensland's agricultural sector. I stress that there was a robust process established, including detailed soil and financial assessments, to ensure we got those permits right. The LNP did deregulate regrowth vegetation that had previously been cleared on freehold land but did not include leasehold land, which covers two-thirds of Queensland.

Having established that, let me turn to the Palaszczuk Labor government's bill and raise some very serious and very genuine concerns. There is a suggestion, first of all, that this is somehow a reinstatement of vegetation laws; it is not. The fact that these are being applied retrospectively is equally reprehensible. For the first time ever, regrowth on the Burnett-Mary catchment is being included, so people who live in Kenilworth, Kidaman Creek, Obi Obi, Mapleton, Flaxton, Montville, Maleny, North Maleny, Balmoral Ridge, Witta, Reesville, Curramore, Booroobin, Bellthorpe, Elaman Creek, Harper Creek, Conondale and Cambrook are going to wake up tomorrow, if this legislation passes, and discover a whole world of green hurt being imposed by this legislation.

If we turn to page 5 of the explanatory notes we look at the concerns around the reverse onus of proof. It is as simple as this: you are not innocent until proven guilty, but rather you are guilty until proven innocent. Then there is new section 128 and the proposed regulated vegetation management maps. This is where I get particularly worked up because in 2009 the then Labor government did it to my constituents when they included macadamia farms as critical koala habitat, and they have done it again. Let me refer to just two examples. The first is Mrs Jennifer Kellie of Woodford. A *Caboolture News* article of 1 June this year states—

Jennifer Kellie was set to lose control of up to 80% of her property under proposed vegetation protection laws map—a map the government has admitted was wrong.

...

... Ms Kellie wouldn't be able to slash the grass she had been cutting on a weekly basis for years, because it would be classed as protected.

'You can't mow under a tree if you follow the new law to the letter. If I chop trees I can get fined on my own property that I've worked a lifetime for,' she said.

'I specifically purchased the land because it had no protection act on it ... it was an ex-dairy farm, so it was all pasture and I mow it like a golf course—it's the best maintained yard in the area.

If honourable members want proof of that, I table the photographs of her property that show very clearly a white picket fence and mown grass lawns.

*Tabled paper:* Email, dated 26 May 2016, from Ms Jennifer Kellie to the Glass House electorate office providing images of a property at Woodford [\[1317\]](#).

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr POWELL:** Certainly no koalas. Furthermore, if members look they will see that some 80 per cent of her property is now covered by these outrageous maps. It gets better because we can then talk about Mr Damien Mee of Mount Mee. He acknowledges that on his property he has a beautiful part of remnant vegetation but the rest of his property was cleared and indeed was an avocado orchard. What do we now have? Apart from a small cut-out area, the property is covered under these 'do not clear' regrowth zones. An avocado orchard is being classed as native regrowth and cannot be cleared. How can it be so wrong? It is through haste to appease the political deals that this Palaszczuk Labor government has established with the Greens. If honourable members want proof of that, they can look at the support the Palaszczuk Labor government is getting. First of all there was the WWF, who put out outrageous statements that under the LNP government we cleared vast amounts of koala habitat that was protected. Even the Deputy Premier had to be careful which words she chose because the truth is that under the LNP the koala was protected as vulnerable federally but not so outside of South-East Queensland at the state level. That means there is no such thing as an essential habitat map for koalas in the state of Queensland outside of South-East Queensland. Therefore, those claims by the WWF are nothing more than fabrication.

Then we have the SLATS report. Again, I refer my constituents to the contribution of the member for Hinchinbrook. I add that Labor and the Greens consistently and conveniently ignore key facts that are spelt out in the SLATS report. In 2012-13 more than 260,000 hectares of vegetation was cleared in Queensland under laws put in place by the Bligh Labor government. The Palaszczuk Labor government is now seeking to restore these very same rules, claiming they will protect the Great Barrier Reef.

The Deputy Premier and the Minister for Environment have also been caught out fudging the figures to suit their political agenda. For example, they deliberately failed to differentiate fodder harvesting in severely drought-affected areas and selective thinning to maintain tree densities from other vegetation management activities, instead classifying them all as broadscale clearing. That is

inappropriate and inaccurate; it is completely and utterly false. Importantly, 62 per cent of all vegetation management activities in 2014-15 involved regrowth on previously cleared land. The report makes it clear that the total area of vegetation management represents just 0.15 per cent of the entire area of Queensland.

Let's take the hysteria out of this debate. Let's take the mistruths, the half-truths and the false reporting out of this debate. Let's debate this legislation on its merits. Let's debate it on fact. When I do that, I cannot support it. I am for the environment. I am for Queensland farmers. I am for balance. The LNP achieved that in 2013. This legislation does not.