



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**


**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Vegetation Management

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (10.10 pm): Like my colleague from Coomera, I wish to thank the whips for the opportunity to speak tonight! I rise to speak on the thickening of vegetation in Queensland—something that is well known and readily observed by landholders in the Warrego electorate and also across regional Queensland. There seems to be a perception, possibly a long-held incorrect belief, by some that there is a loss of native vegetation in Queensland and that this is a major threat to biodiversity. The science and landholders, however, tell a very different story, particularly the science from Mr Bill Burrows, who has a Master of Agricultural Science from the University of Queensland and a PhD from the department of environmental biology in the research school of biological sciences from the Australian National University. He has had some 40 years researching the ecology and management of Queensland's grazed woodlands and authored over 100 research and technical papers published in national and international scientific literature.

Vegetation thickening is the increase in stem density, stem size/basal area and/or the canopy cover compared with the assumed original pre-European condition. The thickening of native vegetation—the increasing of tree cover—is occurring on a much greater scale than native vegetation 'loss', or the removal of trees or regrowth.

I have been interested to read some of the research by Dr Bill Burrows, who outlines that there have been claims that tree clearing led to the equivalent of 360,000 Rugby League football fields being cleared in the past year. He also says that, in comparison, the equivalent of at least 60 million Rugby League football fields were therefore maintained in fact with thickening forest and woodland on Queensland grazing lands over the same time frame. A large portion of the area cleared would have been reclearing of land previously opened up for grazing and cropping as well as clearing on non-agricultural land, and the real clearing trend of in-tact vegetation on rural landscapes would have been much lower than that implied by the headline-chasing statement about numbers of Rugby League football fields.

This view is also supported by reports following a study of the Queensland state government's own Statewide Landcover and Trees Study, which indicates that, while clearing rates increased to 269,000 hectares in 2013-14, the amount of tree coverage still increased by some 337,000 hectares. The SLATS data is further reported to show that vegetation coverage increased in 51 of the 77 local government areas of the state. The science and government data both support that vegetation is increasing and thickening at a greater rate than it is being managed. This is a situation well known by landholders and should be recognised by the members opposite.