




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

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

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (11.11 pm): I rise to speak about the need for more time for the Agriculture and Environment Committee to consult with landholders, land managers and communities across Queensland in relation to the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill; however, in the eyes of my electorate this legislation will very quickly become known as the regional community execution legislation.

It is not just landholders who will be coming forward to talk to the committee about this legislation; there will be local chambers of commerce, small businesses, local governments and many others. It is possible that the committee may be swamped with submissions opposing this legislation, and I want to advise the House about why this might be the case. The Productivity Commission did some estimates in relation to the cost of past Queensland government vegetation management restrictions on communities. The commission found that approximately \$180 million has been removed forever from the Murweh shire alone by former Labor government vegetation management restrictions. That is just one local government area in my electorate, and I have six of those which are much larger.

I know that the committee will hear multiple times how wealth has been ripped from communities and confidence is now gone. Communities and landholders are suffering from government fatigue. They have had vegetation fights before during the Goss, Beattie and Bligh governments. They have had to deal with hostile Labor federal governments that shut down the live cattle trade overnight and an unrelenting drought that has resulted in increased debt levels and financial stress.

Mr SPEAKER: I would urge you to make sure your comments are relevant to the amendment before the House. I call the member for Warrego.

Ms LEAHY: Last week I took a phone call from a landholder who is being harassed by departmental officers in relation to his vegetation management. There are other landholders in my electorate who are in this situation. If there is not adequate time and meaningful consultation so that landholders and communities can have their voices heard, I fear for the mental health of some of my constituents. There are already people I know who are at tipping point, and they need time to have their voices heard on this legislation. Some of them need to do that under parliamentary privilege.

It is disappointing that this legislation was introduced into the House late on a Thursday night. It will only increase the suspicion and distrust of the government. I did hear somebody speak tonight about panic clearing. Unfortunately, it is successive Labor governments with their restrictive legislation that have been the greatest causes of panic clearing.

Unlike members on the other side of the House, I have some idea of the time that it takes to travel throughout regional Queensland. To undertake the consultation correctly, the committee will have to travel to many communities in all of the different bioregions of the state and across the whole state.

That is not easy; it takes time. Regional Queenslanders will put their case forward to the committee; however, every time they have to prepare submissions and take time to appear at a committee hearing or a meeting, this is time they are not paid for. They do this at their own expense, and this is time that is taken away from their businesses and their families. They are not paid; they do it as volunteers.

We are also approaching a period of public holidays with Easter, where public holidays will cut short the number of days available. That is one of the reasons why there is such a need for more time. Unfortunately, what we are seeing here tonight typifies the lack of understanding of regional Queensland by members opposite. At least give regional Queenslanders the time to have an opportunity to have their voices heard.