




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (7.46 pm): I rise to oppose the worst ever Queensland vegetation management legislation, which is a massive assault on property rights and landholders, and it is all about West End, rather than western Queensland. It took former Labor governments 13 years to put in place 18 changes and 38 legislative amendments to the Vegetation Management Act 1999. The Palaszczuk Labor government wants to reinstate those changes on landholders in one foul swoop. It should be noted that this Labor government wanted to do that in only 19 working days of committee consultation. It was the LNP that forced the extended consultation period and the committee reporting date to 30 June. It was the LNP members of the committee who argued for a public committee hearing in Charleville and Roma, so that the landholders in my South-West Queensland electorate could have their say. I am very proud of the professional presentations made by multigenerational landholders from across the electorate. They are good managers. They look after the environment. They manage it well. They understand the science and have done so for generations.

There are a lot of very ill-informed views about vegetation management and science. I wish to enlighten members opposite as to what their government is doing to landholders and farmers in my electorate. I ask the members opposite: how would their constituents feel if the state government passed legislation that took the kitchens out of the homes in their suburbs and said, 'Families, you can keep living there and paying off the mortgage, but you cannot use the kitchen and we will not compensate you'? That is precisely what this legislation does to my constituents. It takes away their ability to sustainably manage vegetation without compensation and says, 'You can keep paying for the devalued asset and watch your profitability decrease'.

It is not only landholders who are outraged by this legislation. The ALP membership are fuming, too. They are saying that this government is not looking and listening in relation to the proposed vegetation management laws. They are also saying that the Deputy Premier would do herself a great deal of good by allowing people who live in the area to educate her on the topic, rather than being hoodwinked by the extremists. The ALP membership have been pleading with the Deputy Premier to visit Western Queensland. They have been pleading for a visit to Bakers Bend, Bollon, the Bulloo or Brigalow, but the Deputy Premier has been to Bonn instead. What an insult to the Western Queensland ALP members.

The landholders and farmers across my electorate are incensed and outraged by this legislation. The Wilderness Society claimed landholders were paraded in front of the committee. That is utter rubbish and it is an insult to every landholder. Ashley McKay from Augathella, who has been unfairly vilified and pursued by Labor governments for six years, had this to say about the legislation—

Queensland is a net carbon sink, it is not a carbon emitter. The Ibuki satellite from Japan and the NASA satellite are independent of Greenpeace and all the other interests in the world, and they are showing that Queensland in particular and Australia in general is a net carbon sink.

San Antonio ran out of water. Thirty years before, they had stopped tree clearing on the Edwards Plateau. Eventually, the government started paying farmers to clear the land to increase the water supply to San Antonio. This is in the Wilcox report of 2003 on the Edwards Plateau, Texas, USA.

Timber dewateres the landscape, and I have personally seen this on a number of occasions on our family properties. Why the state government is seeking to dewater an already dry landscape defies logic.

Andrew Schmidt of Charleville said about this legislation—

The majority of our mulga lands was historically semi open, so why does returning it to its original state become a mortal sin with mandatory sentencing ... why are we branded as criminals with guilt assumed ... An ice courier has more rights.

Guy Newell of Augathella said—

I would like to express my utter disdain for the proposal by the Palaszczuk government to reintroduce the reverse onus of proof provisions into the Vegetation Management Act ... The vegetation mapping may be wrong but we cannot be wrong. These proposed laws will provide rapists, murderers and even petty criminals with more rights than any farmer in Queensland who has a legitimate need to clear and manage vegetation.

Bruce Crichton from Morven, a fourth generation primary producer, said—

Many in this region, and with my own experience, have witnessed an alarming increase in the thickening of vegetation which is decreasing production and ultimately devaluing land.

Kenton Peart of Charleville said—

It appears this government is willing to sacrifice the state's food production potential in order to appease a misled few.

...

The SLATS report states that, despite these theoretical tree clearing rates of 296,000 hectares, tree coverage actually increased by 437,000 hectares during the same period. Vegetation in Queensland is currently increasing at a faster rate than it can be managed.

Robyn Bryant from Mitchell said—

Labor's proposed vegetation management legislation affects each and every person in rural Queensland. It stunts economic growth, puts unnecessary pressure on the people who understand and know the land and suggests that we are incapable of managing our own land and that we also might be criminals for doing it.

Matthew Peart, a fourth-generation primary producer, said—

My mum and dad cleared a brigalow block ... They cleared about 640 trees to the acre. It is about 1,500, 1,800 trees to the hectare. In some of my regrowth work I am now clearing between 100,000 and 130,000 stems a hectare.

Mr Peart also questioned if this is just a total waste of time because it was last time. I quote Mr Peart who is extremely keen to see this legislation fail. He said at the committee hearing in Roma that if this bill fails to pass—

I'll blinkin' drop my daks and run the full length of McDowall Street.

Unfortunately, I believe his time will be wasted and his daks are fairly safe because I can see this government pushing this legislation through.

James Stinson of Roma said—

People's biggest asset is their land ... These people are everyday mums and dads, nannas and pops who just want the best for their family, their livestock and their land. This legislation is just another pressure with massive effect on people's mental and financial state. They are torn between feeding their animals, paying the bank and maintaining regrowth. It is doing people's heads in and it has to stop.

Peter and Sue Joliffe from north-west of Roma said—

The thickening of vegetation has choked out the grasses, causing erosion. Where we have improved the land sustainably for grazing, erosion has been reduced. The land we have developed, needs constant maintenance to keep regrowth from taking over our grazing areas in order to keep it healthy and productive.

Justin MacDonnell from north of Injune said—

The Deputy Premier will happily stand in front of a TV camera and vilify us and tell untruths and talk about statistics that are wrong.

Don Perkins of Dirranbandi said—

If Jackie Trad and her mob want us to leave 30 per cent of unproductive land, maybe she has to pay for it. That is what she is asking us to do.

Anthony Dunn, a fifth-generation landholder, said—

My daughter is currently doing a project at school on the Great Barrier Reef. She can understand why and how principles on our property work, so I would be very disappointed if the state government cannot recognise common-sense when it is clear to a 10 year old.

Dan and Megan Devlin of Roma are typical of many young people in my electorate. They have worked extremely hard and been fortunate that their work has enabled them to realise their dream and purchase a semi-developed block not far from their home farm. It is now their intention to work their guts out and add value to this block and to one day realise the dream of being a full-time farmer and raising a family. They now believe that these laws—what will go through the parliament tonight—will completely destroy their dream. Nothing disappoints me more than Labor governments that destroy the hopes of young people who are passionate about growing, participating and developing the agriculture industry.