




Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**

**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2016

**MINERAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.49 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Mineral and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and the amendments moved by the minister. Can I take a moment to respond to some of the comments that have been made in this debate by the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Burleigh. The member for Hinchinbrook referred to people who want objection rights reinstated as ‘interest groups’. I can tell the member for Hinchinbrook that these so-called interest groups that he speaks of are the landholders of Queensland. They have an interest in mining projects proposed on their land because they have an interest in the ongoing sustainability of their land and their business. I do not understand why the member for Hinchinbrook has a problem with these ‘interest groups’ given that he has a problem, then, with landowners who have concerns about mining impacts on their land. The member for Hinchinbrook also said that there is a misuse of the objection process. We heard the member for Burleigh also swirling that argument around. Despite mining stakeholders’ claims that frivolous or vexatious cases are extensively used by landholders and other groups, the majority of the committee was unable to find evidence to support this view.

I want to raise an important point because last week in this chamber we debated some planning bills. The opposition’s planning bills before the House gave mining companies—in fact, anyone all over the world—the right to object to the development proposals that landholders make on their own land, but those opposite have a problem with giving landowners the right to object to mining projects on their land. I think it is hypocritical that in one bill they will give mining companies the right to object to development on landholders’ land, but in this bill they are objecting to giving landowners the right to object to mining projects on their land.

There was no doubt a swing against the LNP in rural and regional Queensland at the last state election and it was result of this. It was as a result of Strong Choices and asset sales. We heard the member for Clayfield sidestepping that issue today, but stripping away objection rights by those opposite who claim to be friends of landholders, farmers and graziers across rural and regional Queensland proves they are not friends of landholders. I understand today they will vote against the reinstatement of objection rights which so many landholders across Queensland want reinstated.

At the Brisbane public hearing for the MER(CP) Bill in August 2014, Mrs Letitia Farrell, research officer of the Queensland Land Court, confirmed—

In the court’s experience, there have not really been a lot of stalling tactics. If there is, it generally comes from both sides. It is not just landowners or objectors who generally are not ready to proceed; it is also often the mining companies that are not ready.

At the Brisbane public hearing for the MER(CP) Bill in June 2014 Mrs Elisa Nichols, Executive Director of Reform and Innovation in the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, stated—

There is no evidence of vexatious litigation in relation to those low-level, what we call standard applications.

The department undertook an analysis of all of the submissions received on those types of applications back to 2009, and the department did not receive one objection from anyone who was not a landholder directly affected by the mine. The bill will not cost jobs. It is not added red tape, as those opposite claim. This bill will just restore objection rights to the way they were. In fact, the MOLA Bill will bring relief to many people in Queensland.

I know that there are many landholders across the state who are very eager to see the reinstatement of objection rights to mining and projects. It is extremely disappointing that the LNP does not support the reinstatement of objection rights. I believe it is a slap in the face of rural and regional Queenslanders and landholders. It was appalling that in 2014 the LNP at four minutes to midnight moved a series of amendments to restrict objections to mining leases. It was appalling that the LNP stripped the right of landowners to object on matters such as—

**Mr CRIPPS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. The amendments to which the member for Keppel refers are amendments to the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act, which is not the subject of this bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Keppel, I remind you to be relevant to the bill we are debating.

**Mrs LAUGA:** It was appalling that the LNP stripped the right of landowners to object on matters such as impacts on groundwater of large mines. The changes sparked—

**Mr CRIPPS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. The member for Keppel is continuing to make remarks in relation to amendments that refer to provisions within the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act, which is not relevant to this bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Keppel.

**Mrs LAUGA:** The changes to the MER(CP) Bill sparked blistering criticism. *Queensland Country Life* described them as 'a sellout'. Cotton Australia objected to the LNP's 'weakening of transparency, fairness or oversight'. AgForce said that the reduction in rights would erode further any goodwill between the agriculture and resources sector and will not increase possibilities of coexistence. Broadcaster Alan Jones called the changes 'corrupt' and 'unbelievable' amidst other colourful language.

Many of those opposite are members of organisations like Cotton Australia, AgForce and the Queensland Farmers' Federation. Many of those opposite are members of organisations which support the reinstatement of objection rights. The Queensland Farmers' Federation said that it welcomes the state government's move to reinstate landholder rights to protect selected farm infrastructure from mining and petroleum activities. Cotton Australia said, 'We are encouraged to see the exemption of notice provisions and rights of objection have been repealed.' How can those opposite sit there and oppose this bill which is supported by so many of their constituents in rural and regional Queensland and which is also supported by industry organisations of which many of those opposite are members?

No doubt the member for Gregory will be ashamed the next time he attends a Cotton Australia meeting and the member for Warrego, who is a member of AgForce and Property Rights Australia, and the member for Condamine, who is a member of AgForce. All of these organisations support the reinstatement of objection rights and yet their parliamentary friends—the member for Gregory, Warrego and Condamine—are stabbing them in the back on an issue so important to their members. Why would the members in this place who represent rural and regional landowners vote against a bill which will reinstate the rights of their constituents to object to mining projects?

The LNP deserted rural landholders when they took away their rights to object to mining projects. The LNP deserted people like Desley whose family has been farming and grazing around the Acland area for over 100 years. I met Desley when the committee travelled to Acland recently. Desley supports giving the community the right to appeal a mining lease. I agree with Desley. I thank Desley, Lynn and Jane for their outstanding scones, too. It is essential that the community, like Desley, have the right to have their concerns heard with respect to proposed mines.

Desley lives in the electorate of Nanango. When she expressed concerns to the member for Nanango, the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition, about the LNP's removal of objection rights because it would affect her and her family, Desley did not receive a response. The same goes for Fiona Hayard and Peter and Rhonda Selmanovic who contacted their local member, the member for Callide, with concerns about the removal of objection rights, but the member for Callide did not have time to meet with his constituents about an issue of great importance to them.

I know many of the people of the land like Desley, Peter, Rhonda and Fiona will be disappointed to know that their local members did not stand up for them here in this place and support the reinstatement of objection rights. When I last saw Rhonda, with tears in her eyes she hugged me and said, 'Please make this right.' The Palaszczuk government is committed to reinstating objection rights

to mining projects, and this bill will do just that. It was a Queensland Labor election commitment to reinstate these important community objection rights. I rise in this place to right a wrong that was made by the LNP—a wrong that deeply hurt people like Rhonda. We have listened to the community concerns that these laws restricted landholder and community rights, and our bill will rectify this.

Most importantly, we have stepped in to restore these rights before the LNP's laws had any practical effect. No project has proceeded under the LNP's laws. This bill will help set the scene for a productive relationship with resource companies by helping to lessen anxiety towards research development amongst landholders and agricultural stakeholders. This bill represents another important step towards restoring the balance between landholders, the community and the resources sector in Queensland. Why will the LNP not support a bill to reinstate the objection rights that the people of rural Queensland desperately want restored?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee secretariat, in particular, Jacqui, Margaret, Mary, Lucy, Marion and Dianne for their work and also Megan from Hansard, who travelled with us from Toowoomba and Rockhampton. I am proud to rise today to support the Palaszczuk government's reinstatement of objection rights so that landowners can again object to mining projects which may have impacts on their land.