




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (8.33 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. It was introduced into the Queensland parliament on 27 October 2015 by the Hon. Steven Miles, the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection. The Agriculture and Environment Committee tabled its report on 5 February 2016 with seven recommendations and four points for clarification.

I believe that if this legislation is passed without all of the LNP's amendments the rights of many hardworking Queenslanders will be jeopardised. The government has accepted some recommendations of the committee. These recommendations of the committee are absolutely needed to ensure the rights of hardworking Queenslanders and their families so that many rural and regional jobs are protected.

Queensland farmers take a responsible attitude and approach to stock-grazing permits granted to them in national parks. This has always been the case, and the demonisation of farmers that continues to occur in this place by the Palaszczuk Labor government is unfair and unjust. In fact, Queensland farmers can be trusted to be some of our best environmentalists, given the right assistance and the appropriate governmental framework.

As the proposed legislation originally stood, the main object of the legislation was reinstating the conservation of nature as the sole aim of the Nature Conservation Act 1992. It also excluded leases for agriculture, grazing or pastoral purposes on protected areas from the rolling term lease provisions under the Land Act 1994. This change would have allowed the government to remove the land managers when leases expired and would have led to the very worrying precedent whereby sole discretion with respect to decision-making would be handed to the chief executive of the department, the director-general, with no right of appeal. Unfortunately, this short-sighted and unfair approach—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! There is a rising level of general conservation in the chamber. Would members keep in mind that a member is on his feet and we would like to hear him. It is his turn. If members would like to have an extensive conversation, could they please take it outside the chamber.

Dr ROWAN:—would have absolute and significant rural and economic ramifications and consequences for many communities right across Queensland. These ramifications would certainly be heightened during times of significant drought, as has recently been occurring in Queensland.

What the Palaszczuk Labor government proposes with respect to these changes also completely alters the balance of what is presently being achieved by Indigenous communities in relation to economic self-determination and environmental protection. As such, I believe that these changes are a retrograde step for Indigenous communities in rural and regional Queensland. In fact, the committee recommended that the rights and views of traditional owners needed to be valued and well considered in a more thorough manner. This unbalanced agenda by the Palaszczuk Labor government, by way of

removing the local management of protected areas, will limit the ability of Indigenous people to both derive income from and influence the management of such traditional areas. I have to ask if the Palaszczuk Labor government has shown due diligence when making unbalanced decisions that will negatively impact on Indigenous communities as well as our ecotourism operators.

It is also important to note that ecotourism can achieve a number of end points including improved conservation outcomes and local employment whilst also adding to a visitor's life experience and the reputation of Queensland as a tourism destination. The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will prevent local communities being able to determine both the use and the management of their local areas, areas that have been inhabited for years by generations of Queenslanders and their families before them. How can the Palaszczuk Labor government say to these communities that it knows what is best?

Unfortunately, this bill has absolutely nothing to do with the protection of our environment. It is more about protecting Greens preference deals in the future, as this shambolic Labor government lurches from one crisis to the next, asleep at the wheel, with no credible vision or plan for economic growth, wealth creation or infrastructure investment. It is a government that is beholden to union bosses. This legislation will also potentially reduce the capacity of Queensland to deal with declared weeds and feral animals and to implement safe rural fire mitigation measures—measures that are much needed in Queensland.

As I have said, I have a number of reservations with respect to many aspects of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The potential for the rights of leaseholders with respect to grazing operations to be stripped away with inadequate appeal mechanisms is of great concern. The LNP has proposed a number of amendments in order to protect jobs. Without the LNP's full amendments, the proposed Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will create havoc for hardworking families and reduce the capacity of Queensland to deal with declared weeds and feral animals and to support Indigenous communities as well as to create sustainable ecotourism ventures in our great state.

It is of the utmost importance that local Indigenous groups as well as local landholders and their families who have managed and looked after these areas for generations are allowed to continue to do so. During the previous terms of former Labor governments under Goss, Beattie and Bligh many forest grazing leases were converted to national park status without proper environmental assessments, meaning that many in Queensland were locked out. The former Bligh government made the decision not to renew state forest grazing leases in the western hardwood areas of Queensland in order to meet its election promise to increase the area of national parks in the state. That decision saw 1.2 million hectares of grazing land converted to national parks and 280 graziers lose their grazing permits.

Mr Costigan: What a stat that is!

Dr ROWAN: That is a terrible statistic, and I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday. At the time AgForce sent a clear message saying that grazing is an appropriate use of forestry land where it is compatible with existing forest values and where the activity does not compromise the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management—in other words, striking the balance when there are competing interests in order to achieve an acceptable outcome. It must also be said that appropriate grazing can reduce natural fuel loads and associated inherent fire risks.

In conclusion, I commend the work of the former shadow minister, the member for Burnett, particularly with respect to his proposed amendments, and the LNP members of the committee. I believe that a balanced approach can be achieved through sensible and reasoned debate. Ensuring access for social, cultural and educational purposes is important and is a priority for the Liberal National Party. The status quo must be maintained with respect to rolling term leases. Protecting the environment is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today. Whilst the conservation of Queensland's national parks is essential, particularly with respect to the natural landscape, flora and fauna and public enjoyment and educational benefit, the economic impacts of any legislative change must always be considered and appropriately managed in a methodical and considered manner. The Liberal National Party will always achieve and deliver a balanced approach when competing interests exist.