



Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 18 August 2016

**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (4.28 pm): I rise to address the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Queensland farmers take a responsible attitude and approach to vegetation management. In fact, Queensland farmers can be trusted to be some of our best environmentalists, given the right assistance and the appropriate incentives within a sustainable legislative framework. It can be said that the responsible care and due diligence with respect to the land of which farmers are custodians means that it is in the interests of such farmers to ensure the protection and long-term sustainability of such lands that they own and manage. The Palaszczuk Labor government has no shame in demonising farmers and graziers to acquiesce to an extreme left-wing Greens agenda.

Both Queensland and Australia are facing a crisis of sensible and reasonable policy discussion as a result of the centre left's baseless rhetoric and Marxist driven agendas. The centre left abuses those who want to discuss sensible immigration policies. The centre left accuses such people of being bigots or racists. If you support women who choose to stay at home to look after children, the centre left brands you sexist. If you support sensible vegetation management strategies and sustainable farming practices, the centre left brands you an environmental vandal. This is outrageous and scandalous. The sinister elements of the Palaszczuk Labor government seek to silence, isolate and destroy, often in collaboration with blatantly biased, left-wing journalists of some media outlets whose analysis is insidiously manipulative and professionally corrupted to meet their predetermined outcome. That is certainly the case with respect to this legislation.

The environment minister and the energy minister believe that climate change is exclusively, only, 100 per cent due to mankind and human endeavours. As such, they want to stop all progress, lock up everything and return us to prehistoric times. Their agenda is fanciful and unrealistic. Whilst humans have contributed to and do contribute to climate change and this must be managed, the LNP will always achieve a balance between progress and sound environmental protections. For the environment minister to suggest that the LNP members do not care about water quality, catchment areas and the Great Barrier Reef is truly shameful. We may not agree on the best way to do it, but I know that everyone in this House cares about the future of the Great Barrier Reef. The ongoing politicisation of the Great Barrier Reef by Labor is also shameful. In 2013, the LNP, when in government, introduced sensible vegetation management laws and practices. Graziers and farmers were able to maintain fence lines and pull fodder to feed stock.

With respect to vegetation management, food production and supply and our state's agricultural exports will be affected by Labor's draconian proposals. The Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef, the Hon. Steven Miles MP, has

no credibility on this issue. The member for Mount Coot-tha's misleading statements on land-clearing rates are aimed at ensuring that he continues to receive Greens preferences for his electorate at the next state election. The minister's selective use of data and manipulation of the recent SLATS report for political purposes is extraordinary, biased and unfair.

Labor's proposed legislation will destroy jobs, destroy rural families, increase suicide rates in rural communities and destroy our agricultural sector. Labor's laws will put the economic prosperity of Queensland at risk. As such, the myopic approach being taken by the Palaszczuk Labor government will have significant rural and economic ramifications for many communities across Queensland.

As I have said, this legislation is about protecting green 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 in our great state of Queensland. We are seeing a vindictive Labor government that is beholden to unions, the Greens and other third parties with an ideologically, unbalanced and sinister agenda that fails to recognise and manage our agricultural sector within a framework of environmental sustainability. This Labor government should hang its head in shame. It is no wonder that the Tree of Knowledge is dead, rotten to the core as the Labor Party has abandoned its rural roots in Barcaldine, in Western Queensland and right across Queensland.

The Deputy Premier's allegations that the Commonwealth government's recent actions in Queensland with respect to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 are related to vegetation clearing in Queensland are false and untrue. The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 impugns many property rights and the significant scope and magnitude of the bill will have many long-term unintended ramifications and consequences far beyond the Labor government's intent. Labor's legislative agenda is a direct attack on individual property rights and an attack on rural and regional communities. Basic civil liberties are denied in this legislation and the included reversal of onus of proof provisions are unfair and unjust.

Under this legislation, landowners will no longer be able to apply for high-value agricultural permits that allow for the clearing of vegetation for cropping and horticulture. That means that cattle growers will not be able to clear new land to grow hay and feedstock, particularly in times of drought. The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 will damage rural investment, devalue property prices and reduce agricultural productivity. As I have said, this legislation is aimed at demonising farmers and is being implemented as a result of a backroom deal between the Deputy Premier and the environment minister with the Greens to secure their preferences not only at the last state election but also at the next state election.

This bill should not be supported as it has the potential to detrimentally affect food security, house and land prices in Queensland, as well as urban development. That was clearly articulated in the submissions to the bill by the Queensland Resources Council and the Property Council of Australia. As the Liberal National Party shadow minister for natural resources and mines, Andrew Cripps MP, has articulated on many occasions, this legislation is the most anti farmer, anti agriculture and anti rural document ever presented to the Queensland parliament. However, this legislation is also significantly anti development and will impact on all home owners in Queensland.

I have grave concerns about the impacts of this legislation with respect to environmental offsets. The significant impact test is currently understood and, whilst not absolutely perfect in all senses, at least it is understood and used in various pieces of environmental legislation. The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 has reached beyond just amending the Vegetation Management Act to revising the Environmental Offsets Act 2014. By removing the materiality test, by removing the term 'significant' from the legislation, it will mean that every action and every impact will need to be offset. As such, not only the resources sector but also many other vital industries will be adversely affected. Housing affordability, particularly in urban and regional Queensland, will also be negatively impacted.

There is the real risk of the duplication of environmental offset requirements for development projects at both state and Commonwealth levels. As such, Queensland's state based environmental offsets framework could become a tax by stealth and be a metrics driven process as opposed to being outcomes focused for the environment. How these proposed changes will be practically implemented, let alone monitored, has to be asked. Perhaps the Palaszczuk Labor government may be angling for another sneaky union jobs plan. There is no doubt in my mind that ordinary homebuyers in my electorate of Moggill and across Queensland will be the ultimate bearers of higher costs associated with the impact of the changes in this legislation on the Environmental Offsets Act 2014.

I urge all members of this House to vote against Labor's proposed vegetation management legislation as well as the Palaszczuk Labor government's Marxist ideological and socialist political agenda. What is needed in Queensland is a government that can balance competing interests, a government that can drive and create economic prosperity and a government that can create real jobs whilst also delivering sustainable environmental protection. This is what the Liberal National Party will always be able to achieve when in government, unlike those members opposite. I do not support this bill and, in doing so, I encourage all members to read the LNP's statement of reservation with respect to this legislation.