




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 18 August 2016

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

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (9.28 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the bill. We have heard a lot from the opposition tonight, but we have not touched upon the issue of climate change. This bill is a crucial part of the actions that we need to take to combat climate change. We have to take action against climate change. Climate change is real and it will change our state. I talked about how it will change our state in my inaugural speech and I will touch on some of these issues. This is what we are facing in Queensland if we do not act. There will be more extreme rain events and they will be more destructive and extremely expensive. The 2011 floods caused \$56 million worth of damage to public infrastructure.

Due to heat stress, slower growth, lesser breeding success and reduced appetite, our \$5 billion beef industry will decline by 19 per cent in 2030 and 33.5 per cent in 2050. As reefs bleach and highland forests are fragmented, the tourism industry will decline. The Great Barrier Reef brings in \$12.6 billion in direct and value-added expenditure, and employs nearly 70,000 Australians. Tourism will be worth \$51.4 billion in visitation dollars over the next 100 years. Rising seas will place \$31.3 billion worth of roads, commercial buildings, industrial sites, houses and railways under threat in the next 100 years.

We are already suffering from the effects of climate change here in Queensland. In my time as a councillor and member of parliament, in the areas that I represent I have seen two one-in-1,000-year rain events. That is a 0.1 per cent chance plus a 0.1 per cent chance of those things happening. Our infrastructure and our houses are built to cope only with a one-in-100-year flood event. They cannot cope with a one-in-1,000-year flood event. During those two rain events, I saw whole neighbourhoods that were devastated.

In Queensland, the best and most effective legislative action that we can take to stop that getting worse is to stop emissions released through land clearing and protect the carbon that is locked up in vegetation. That is the best way to shield all Queenslanders, including rural producers, from the effects of climate change. Over the last day or so, I have found it galling to hear opposition members say that they will oppose the bill to protect rural producers. I state: the rural economy will suffer the most from climate change. Rural producers will bear the impact of runaway climate change. If we want to protect their interests, we need to protect them from climate change.

Of course, if you do not believe climate change is actually a threat, you will not take action. Incredibly, it looks like the LNP does not believe climate change exists. The member for Moggill has questioned the extent of human contribution to climate change. He says it is in scientific dispute. Here we have a man of science rejecting the opinion of 97 per cent of scientists. The shadow minister for the environment is ignoring the opinion of all climate scientists.

Dr ROWAN: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading. I find it personally offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Murrumba?

Mr WHITING: I withdraw, but I also table this article.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 17 August 2016, from the *Brisbane Times* titled 'LNP environment spokesman questions human contribution to climate change' [1328].

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can do that.

Mr WHITING: I withdraw.

An honourable member: You're back on camera 2, Ritchie.

Mr WHITING: Indeed, thank you very much. The former minister for the environment, the member for Glass House, could not even say the term 'climate change'. During three years of the LNP government, he could not even say it. During his near one-hour speech last night, the member for Hinchinbrook could not even say the phrase 'climate change'. The only member opposite to say 'climate change' was the member for Hervey Bay. Climate change is a massive public policy issue for the future of the state.

Mr Cripps: Only if you carry on about it forever.

Mr WHITING: Perhaps the member would like to listen, because he has not talked too much about it in the past. Climate change is a massive public policy issue for the future of the state and to deny it is a massive abrogation of responsibility. The public needs to hear the LNP say that they think climate change is real or that it is not. The member for Moggill: does he actually believe climate change exists? The member for Glass House: can he state whether climate change is or is not a threat to Queensland?

Dr ROWAN: I rise to a point of order. I find the member misleading, based on my speech tonight.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! If you find the member misleading, you may put that in writing to the Speaker.

Dr ROWAN: I find his comments personally offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: We need to be a bit circumspect about claiming personal offence for every single thing. Can the member explain to me what it is about what the member said that you found personally offensive?

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is a gross departure from the normal procedure of this House. As long as I have been here, which is a fair while, every member has had the right to find comments made about them personally offensive and ask for them to be withdrawn, without explanation to the chair. That has always been the case, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I doubt whether you have the authority to change that.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. It is true that comments made that are personally offensive should be withdrawn, if a member finds them offensive, but the honourable member for Murrumba was not making comment; he was asking a question. He was posing a question. How anyone could find offence through the proposition of a question beggars belief.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will say two things: you, member for Moggill, may make—

Mr Hart: 'You'?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I beg your pardon?

Mr Hart: 'You'; is that what you said? 'You'?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take offence at your tone and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Hart: I withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take offence at that tone and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Hart: I withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The member for Moggill may ask the member for Murrumba to withdraw his comment. I ask the member for Callide to withdraw because of the tone in which you questioned my ruling. Member for Callide, I ask you to withdraw your comment. I accept your comment, but I find the tone in which you addressed the Deputy Speaker to be personally offensive and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Murrumba?

Mr WHITING: I withdraw. Last night, I heard the member for Hinchinbrook say that he is speaking up for real people, real industries and real communities. I am speaking up for the real people, real

businesses and real communities in my area. They are the ones who are now facing the spectre of the continual flooding that we can expect to see from climate change. They are real people such as Liz Parks from Major Street in Deception Bay. Her place has been flooded three times in the past 18 months. They are real people such as Kylie from Northshore Pet Resort in Rothwell, which has suffered from continual flooding in recent years. In the May 2015 floods, they had to haul their boarded pets out by hand in order to save them. There could well be other factors in the flooding, but we cannot explain the sheer volume of downpour without the forcing of excessive carbon in the atmosphere. To the members opposite I say that businesses in their communities are potentially facing disasters such as these floods, and scientists are pointing the finger at climate change and the forcing actions of CO₂ concentrations.

This debate is one of those moments that people will look back on in future years. One of the things that they will be asking the LNP is, why did you not take action on this issue? Why could you not take up the one bit of legislative action that could have made a real difference to the future? I commend the bill to the House.