




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL, REPORTING DATE

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.06 am): I rise to speak in support of the amendment to the motion that has been moved by the Leader of Opposition Business. What a slap in the face for landholders in Queensland tonight! If ever they needed confirmation that the agricultural sector in this state is at the bottom of the Labor Party's list of priorities there is no better example than what we have witnessed here tonight.

This time frame, as proposed by the Deputy Premier, is nothing short of contemptuous. To give the committee 30 days, or 19 working days as it is now, to report back to this House makes a mockery of the committee process and simply reinforces that this government is hell-bent on ramming this legislation through parliament in the shortest possible time frame.

Queensland is a vast state. We have already heard tonight about the expectation that this committee will consult throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. When we think that it is not beyond the realms of possibility that there could be 20 or 30 meetings with farming organisations and community groups right across the state and it is expected that this committee do that before 15 April then they would need to be doing two to three meetings a day every single day commencing today. That gives us some indication of the enormity of the task facing the committee in undertaking a true consultation process across the state of Queensland.

Make no mistake, the ramifications of this bill on our rural and regional areas is massive. To embark on this ideological crusade to save our trees is both short-sighted and insulting to all those people who live on the land.

There is also another point here. That is the recent announcement by the federal government of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility and what that might mean in terms of the development of Northern Australia. I wonder what they will think today when they wake up and find out that this legislation has been proposed? We have had no end of ministers coming through Northern Australia and North Queensland telling us about the development that they are expecting and looking forward to and the opportunities for agricultural development. I wonder what they will think when they see this legislation? I certainly hope that does not reduce our likelihood and chances of securing some of that money going forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have lived and worked throughout much of Central and Northern Queensland and I can assure you that a lot of the land cleared by our farmers is so overgrown with rubber vine and prickly acacia that it is virtually useless and is nothing more than a haven for feral animals and noxious weeds. I can recall graziers in Cape York living on properties of half a million acres who struggled to make a living because they could not improve their land. This state was built on the back of our farmers. Given the current downturn in the mineral resource sector, I think it is our agricultural industry that can really benefit and take this state forward into the future.

Good decision-making is about being informed. It is about having available to hand the relevant information, the facts and the evidence so that the decisions you are making have been researched, are well grounded and will withstand scrutiny. That is what we are talking about here. If we rush into making decisions that we have to live with for the next several years, it will have huge ramifications for our rural sector. We need to get this right. All Queenslanders, and particularly those on the land, deserve the opportunity to be heard and to put forward their case regarding the proposed legislation.

I say to government members: do not underestimate the passion and the feeling out there in rural and regional Queensland about vegetation management. This proposal by the government to have the committee report back by 15 April will sweep through this state like a tsunami and that anger will grow over the coming days and reverberate through the length and breadth of Queensland in a way they could not begin to imagine. I am saying to the government: do the right thing, put the Greens back in their box and give this bill the time that it needs to be properly considered.