



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 30 August 2016

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Vegetation Management**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.17 pm): On 18 August Queenslanders breathed a sigh of relief because the draconian vegetation management laws proposed by those opposite were voted down in this place. It was a vote for common sense. It was a vote for the future development of Queensland and, more importantly, it upheld the rights of Queensland farmers who are continuing to protect the Great Barrier Reef. The proposed laws, if passed, would have stymied development right across Queensland and put at risk thousands of jobs, the livelihoods of our farmers and the future of rural communities.

Our Queensland farmers have had their futures placed in limbo by this government for months. On 18 August Queensland sent a message to this government and that message was very clear: leave our vegetation management laws alone and do not mess with our farmers. The president of AgForce, Grant Maudsley, said—

AgForce has always been willing to work through a science and evidence based process, but the Queensland Government has been more interested in green politics than developing good policies.

All we have been asking for is fair laws for farmers so we can grow our businesses to produce more food and create more jobs for Queenslanders.

That comment was reaffirmed during the debate on this bill. What we heard from those opposite, led by the Deputy Premier, was a vitriolic attack on our farmers based on misinformation, spurious claims and hysteria. It was a desperate attempt by a government for a few Greens votes at the next election at the expense of our agriculture sector. The Deputy Premier is already on record as saying, 'If re-elected we will pass these important laws.' Indeed, dark clouds are on the horizon for our agriculture sector because while we have a Deputy Premier running around this state making statements like that our farmers' livelihoods are under threat. Comments from the Deputy Premier linking the bill's defeat to a possible Great Barrier Reef in danger declaration by UNESCO are misleading and nothing short of scaremongering.

As I said during the debate on this bill, our farmers and landowners are not environmental vandals. They are not criminals. They deserve our respect and thanks for the job they do in providing the food we eat. They are as committed to the protection of the reef as the most ardent greenie, and all they have ever asked for is a sensible, sustainable long-term vegetation management framework which they currently have in place. Already a significant number of canefarmers in my electorate of the Burdekin are committed to the Canegrowers Sugarcane BMPs, which are designed to reduce run-off to the reef and improve the efficiency of their farms. This is just one example of the commitment of our farmers to the protection of our reef.

Queensland agriculture has the potential to grow from \$17 billion per year to \$30 billion over the next decade, and that growth would have been put at serious risk if the Palaszczuk government's proposed changes had gone ahead. The voting down of the vegetation management bill has already

translated into growing confidence across Queensland. Last week MSF Sugar at Maryborough announced plans for a significant expansion of its irrigated sugarcane production area, which means more jobs for Queenslanders. Last week I spoke with potential investors who are genuinely interested in the opportunities available in the agriculture sector, and of course one of the first questions they asked was, 'Are we able to clear land in Queensland?' Thankfully I can now answer that question with a yes, giving them the certainty they need to invest in our great state.

The Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility can now move forward with confidence to deliver those projects that North Queensland so desperately needs. If we are to tap into these funds and truly develop the north and unleash its potential, we need to get rid of the obstacles and reduce the red tape, and having appropriate vegetation management laws in place is a good start. We need projects that will create jobs and help to keep our rural and regional communities alive. What we do not need is a government with a track record of making decisions on the run, and of course the 18 minutes notice that was given on the introduction of compulsory preferential voting is a good example. Those opposite are treating our farmers as political footballs. Members on this side of the House are proud to support our farmers, and we will continue to do so into the future because at the end of the day every family needs a farmer.