




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (11.16 pm): I rise in support of the motion by the Leader of Opposition Business. I certainly do not support the legislation that has been introduced today by the Labor government. As many of you would probably know it takes a bit to get me riled up, but I can tell you now that you have managed to get me riled up on this. Not so much on the legislation that you are introducing—I am angry about that—but what I am riled up about is the lack of consultation you are giving regional Queensland with regard to this legislation which you are rushing through in the dead of night. It is unbelievable that the Labor Party would allow just under 20 business days for stakeholders to understand—and stakeholders also include farmers in my electorate and right across regional Queensland—this legislation and the impact of this legislation on Queenslanders.

Labor are back to their old ways to demonise graziers and farmers across the state at the expense of Green votes here in Brisbane. What do we have here? Callous vegetation management laws rushed through in the dead of night. The committee now has until 15 April to report back. We have under 20 business days to understand this legislation. The Labor government has not consulted anyone whatsoever. We heard today that they have consulted the green groups. We have also heard of possible blackmailing tactics by the green groups when it comes to this legislation. The other disappointing thing about this is that it is retrospective from today, yet you are only giving them 20 days to consult stakeholders right across regional Queensland.

What happened to the promise from the Labor government that they would listen and they would consult with Queenslanders? What has happened to that? Labor's consultation process was frozen after just one meeting, and they have no real plan to grow agricultural jobs in regional Queensland. The Queensland parliament should not consider any changes to the vegetation management framework which were introduced by the former minister for natural resources, Andrew Cripps, the member for Hinchinbrook, until the Labor government can demonstrate that it has properly consulted with farmers and landholders as they promised to do on several occasions.

Consultation is something the Labor Party have been on about for the past 12 months. They have said that they are a party that will consult. Tell me how under 20 business days represents consultation with stakeholders across regional Queensland! This legislation will have an impact on graziers and landholders right across this state, even in regional areas represented by Labor members. They need to be consulted so they understand what has been presented tonight by the Labor Party including reinstating the protection of regrowth on freehold and Indigenous land; the removal of provisions which permit clearing applications for high-value agriculture and irrigated high-value agriculture; and broadening the protection—this was brought up by the member for Hinchinbrook—of regrowth vegetation in areas in the Burnett-Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy catchment areas.

Mr Rickuss: I do not think they realise how big it is.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection. One of the most disturbing things about this legislation, which needs proper consultation, is the reinstatement of compliance provisions for the reverse onus of proof. That is very disturbing to many landholders across regional Queensland.

The government talks about being a government of consultation. I am a bit perplexed. I remember that 12 months ago it promised to fast-track wild dog funding for Western Queensland and we received the money only last month. It took 12 months to fast-track dog funding for Western Queensland but the government is going to consult with regional Queensland landholders and graziers in under 20 business days!

I was hoping that when the government flagged they were going to make changes to vegetation management they would have turned to the Minister for Natural Resources and said to him, 'We need you to consult on this important piece of legislation that the Labor Party want to put through. We really need you to consult on this. Jump in your car or on a Dash 8 and fly out to Emerald, Longreach and Charleville. We want you to consult with graziers and landholders on the ground. We want you to hold round-table meetings with graziers on the ground. We want you to talk to them personally. We want you to talk to the business owners who rely on these landholders and these graziers.'

Mr Costigan: Indigenous people.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection: 'We want you to consult with our Indigenous communities, who will rely on the ability to increase their food and fibre production in order to increase opportunities and create incomes for their communities.' This week we have been talking about closing the gap. There is a great opportunity to close the gap in these Indigenous communities when we allow them to increase their food and fibre production. What happened there? Did the Deputy Premier or the Premier say, 'Jump in a vehicle. Jump in your car. Go out to Jundah. Head to Stonehenge. Head to Yaraka. Head to Longreach. Head to Clermont in the brigalow belt where we need to see more opportunities'? What happened there?

Mr Boothman interjected.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection. Where is the Minister for Agriculture on this issue? Why is she not standing up and saying, 'Hang on, Deputy Premier. We want to innovate in Queensland. We have Advance Queensland. We want to see innovation. We want to see increases in production'? Where is the Minister for Agriculture saying, 'Hang on. This could stop what we are trying to achieve'? I hope that the Minister for Agriculture comes in here and speaks to this motion tonight. I hope that she speaks about the need to consult more with our landholders and our graziers across many parts of Queensland. Of course, I will get an opportunity to speak about this tomorrow because I am heading off to the AgForce conference in Rockhampton.

Mr Costigan: I wonder what they are going to talk about.

Mr MILLAR: Well, they will be talking about this. Guess who else is heading off to the AgForce conference in Rockhampton? It is the Minister for Agriculture. The Minister for Agriculture will get to meet those landholders we need to consult with right across Queensland. I hope that the Minister for Agriculture does listen to these landholders—to the anger and frustrations they have.

I remember the member for Callide taking up this issue for a very long time with regard to property rights. The issue of vegetation management has been a political football for far too long. The former minister for natural resources and the former deputy premier, the member for Callide, got it right. They gave the opportunity for landholders to make decisions for their land that they knew would be sustainable and also increase production.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Member for Gregory, I ask you to make sure you are staying close to the matter at hand.

Mr MILLAR: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. Consultation is something that will be raised tomorrow in Rockhampton. I look forward to the Minister for Agriculture being there. I am sure the Minister for Agriculture will get some great speaking notes on consultation and the time frame and how we need to rush in these laws. We do not need to rush in these laws. We need to give landholders and graziers from Longreach to Yaraka, down to Quilpie and Windorah, across to Charleville and Roma—right across Western Queensland and up towards Cape York—enough time to understand the legislation the government has introduced and how it will affect them.

We can talk and argue about vegetation management and the legislation the government has introduced, but what we are arguing now is consultation. For the past 12 months the government has said, 'We are a government of consultation. We do not like to rush things. We like to just move things along and include Queenslanders.' We have had review after review. How about we have a little bit more patience and give time and respect to landholders and graziers across Queensland?

Mr Boothman: Look at the taxi review.

Mr MILLAR: Absolutely. We have had review after review. Why can we not hold off on this? Why can we not give some time to landholders? Why can we not show respect by giving them time to understand this? They can look at this legislation and at least have the option to express an opinion on this legislation.

I call on the Deputy Premier and the Labor government to provide more time for consultation on this legislation, which will have a massive impact on the people I represent, the people many of us represent and the people represented by those on the other side of the House. Let us give them the respect they deserve and allow them more time to understand what the government is introducing into parliament tonight.