




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (9.53 pm): Tonight I am speaking about an issue that I am very passionate about: the impact of this bill on local cattle producers right across Queensland. The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will have a devastating impact on our agricultural sector, especially the valuable beef industry, which is worth billions of dollars to the Queensland economy and plays a critical role in Central Queensland. This legislation before us can be very cruel because it will remove highly regarded sustainable beef grazing families from well-maintained and managed rolling leases from former forestry leases converted into national parks, so what we are talking about here is land that was a forestry lease which has been grazed for generations. I am talking about generations here, people who have done this—

Mr Hart interjected.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection from the member for Burleigh. This is very important to people out my way. This country has been sustainably grazed and well-maintained for generations, and I am going to talk about a family tonight which has gone above and beyond to make sure that their grazing operation is sustainable. Previous Goss, Beattie and Bligh Labor governments converted many grazing leases to national park status without any proper environmental assessment or valuation that would withstand independent scrutiny. I understand that the member for Gympie will be speaking soon, and he will give a classic example of how that happened.

The LNP was very concerned that this Labor government had little regard to the consequences for grazing families in Gregory and right across regional Queensland who pay their taxes, play their part in the community and use local mechanics and local people to keep their economies going not only on their properties, but in regional communities. These families have held grazing leases for generations. This is certainly a very difficult issue which has had huge impacts on families right across regional Queensland. I want to talk about one family which gives us a classic example of how this legislation will have a devastating impact on the way that they operate. With the stroke of a pen the Labor Party is crushing the financial viability of hardworking families in the seat of Gregory for some Greens preferences to make sure that they keep the Greens happy. Those opposite do not worry about what rural and regional Queensland are going through because that stroke of a pen will have a devastating impact. Tonight I want to talk about the impact that this legislation is having on one particular family which typifies the impact that this legislation is having on many beef production operations across Queensland.

I am talking about a success story in our beef industry which is being put at risk by the Labor government. Goathlands is a certified organic grazing property which has long been operated by Peter Mayne and his family, especially son Struan and his partner Hannah. They are a young family wanting to have a go in agriculture. In addition to being organically certified, the Maynes also abide by the Global Animal Partnership code of practice. This requires annual audits which check, among other things, that

there has been no use of poisons, including on their animals, no poison sprays and no baiting for wild dogs. We are talking about an operation which is globally recognised under ISO certification and which meets the standards of any corporate governance when it comes to environmental standards placed on any corporate company across the world. These people have taken this option and invested money in infrastructure to make sure that they are organically certified. What we have here is a family that is going above and beyond their requirements as graziers in Queensland.

As a part of this sustainable practice, for many years a grazing lease over a section adjoining the Carnarvon National Park has formed part of their successful business plan. Their lease is 50,000 acres which they use as one paddock, so there are no fences to interfere with the wildlife. Their sustainable strategy manages pastures and ground cover through rotational grazing, and it is here that their park lease plays a small but vital role. It carries only 500 head of cows over only three to four months of the year. Other than that it is left stock free. This limited grazing a vital to Goathlands' business model, but what does it return for Queensland? What does it give back to Queensland in return for doing that? It gives it additional Crown rents, so it pays its money. Queenslanders also receive stewardship over the land at no taxpayer dollar outlay. They also manage the feral pests and weeds on the property and pay their local government rates. While this part of Queensland is very beautiful, it is also rugged. The sustainable model manages both bushfires—which is very important—and erosion by ensuring there is always optimal ground cover across that grazing lease. Grazing for the crucial three to four months ensures that the fuel load does not become a bushfire hazard. It also ensures ground cover to stop erosion. It also eradicates the pests and weeds for free.

With the stroke of a pen, the government is removing opportunities for well-qualified, organically certified young grazing families to expand. We are talking about a grazing operation which is meeting the highest standards of certification, which goes beyond what is required. What we are talking about here is ripping away a very positive increase in cattle production. That has flow-on effects beyond the farm gate. It has an effect on jobs and employment opportunities in regional Queensland, from station hands to jackaroos, jillaroos and apprentice mechanics in those local towns. It will have an impact on school numbers and on enticing people into a career in agriculture. Most importantly, it will have a huge impact on local graziers across regional Queensland.

What the government is trying to achieve with this legislation, with the stroke of a pen, is to pay back some Greens preferences given to Labor in some inner-city seats. What about the people in regional Queensland who go well above and beyond to make sure they are organically certified and ISO accredited? They are great custodians of that country. They pay their rents. They pay Crown land rents. They also provide, free of charge, a reduction in potential bushfire impacts on national parks. They are giving us a free service, and this bill will rip that opportunity away from them.

We all want to see regular jobs created in bush towns, growing agriculture and recognising the sustainable ways—

Mr Krause: They don't.

Mr MILLAR: No, they do not. This is completely wrong. We are talking about people who are doing absolutely the right thing with their lease. They are providing an opportunity to grow Queensland's economy and grow cattle production in Queensland. This legislation will impact on regional towns. It will have an impact on local meatworks and meatworkers in Rockhampton, for example. We have an opportunity to do this properly. These graziers have been certified and have gone well above and beyond what graziers have to do. We are ripping their life apart and taking an opportunity away from them. I think that is completely wrong.

We have an opportunity to recognise that beef producers across Queensland do the right thing. They look after the land. They are sustainable in their production. This legislation, with the stroke of a pen, will take away an opportunity from them. I think that is completely wrong.