




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (10.19 pm): We have no economy without protecting our environment. They are two closely linked, mutually dependent elements of our community. However, it is a lesson we have yet to learn as a community, given the entrenched opposition to this bill by the LNP and by most crossbenchers. I speak tonight emphatically in support of the Palaszczuk Labor government's restoration of tree-clearing laws, the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

Given that this bill is likely to be defeated tonight due to LNP and crossbench opposition, today is a sad day for Queensland's environment and for action on climate change. It means the Newman government's stripping of tree-clearing protections in 2013 will remain in place despite the LNP's promise not to touch the laws made before Campbell Newman was elected in 2012. It was a clear deception and misleading of Queenslanders by the LNP before the 2012 election, and that deception will stand most likely after the vote tonight. The LNP, including the current opposition leader, Tim Nicholls, did not have the courage to tell the people about the environmental destruction they had planned before the 2012 election, and that piece of political trickery may well remain in place tonight. That is bad news for Queensland's environment.

In 2010-11 we saw 91,690 hectares of vegetation on Queensland land bulldozed. With the LNP weakening of laws in place from 2013 under Campbell Newman, Queensland saw nearly 300,000 hectares bulldozed in 2014-15, a tripling of clearing rates in only four years. The numbers do not lie. Let me repeat that figure: just under 300,000 hectares of land was bulldozed in just one year. This means that 90 per cent of Australia's carbon emissions relating to land clearing comes from our state of Queensland. That is not a record that this state can be proud of. We are contributing unsustainably to global warming and rising sea temperatures via bulldozing of trees and vegetation after the turning back of the clock to the 1990s under the previous premier and treasurer and now current opposition leader.

The greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef is climate change; that is an established fact. Now all political parties and politicians claim to love the reef. They want to protect it; they want to be seen to be with it. Tonight is all about acting on those pro-reef sentiments: walking the walk when we have no time to waste on either protecting the reef or acting on climate change. Unlike the current LNP shadow minister for environment, the member for Moggill, or the former minister for environment under Campbell Newman, the current member for Glass House, it is clear that human induced climate change is real, happening and becoming obvious.

Last month was the hottest month in recorded history. According to NASA—not known to be a particularly left-wing organisation; the somewhat precise and methodical space agency who if its

research and calculations are out by thousandths or millionths that results in rocket explosions and astronaut deaths—more than 97 per cent of actively publishing climate scientists agree climate warming trends over the past century are extremely likely to be due to human activities. Most of the leading scientific organisations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position—organisations such as the US National Academy of Sciences, the Geological Society of America and the American Medical Association just to name three. Yet the LNP members for Glass House and Moggill know better than NASA in terms of doubting human impacts on climate change. It is really quite astonishing and astounding that that should be the case given that the year is 2016, not 1916. To be quite frank, I find that embarrassing for this House.

One expects denial of scientific facts from One Nation as par for the course—queue the eye roll—but for a major political party, the Liberal National Party, to doubt human impacts accelerating climate change it is embarrassing. It also devastating for our environment, which is needlessly being left with inadequate tree clearing and vegetation management laws and people will needlessly suffer as a result.

As an adult, I try to seek out the truth. Facts established by rigorous scientific inquiry are at the heart of human progress. Without it, the human race would resemble other species and their characteristics. Through science, we have developed architecture, ships, culinary skills, medicines, production, manufacturing, fuels, energy, space exploration and the digital world. However, 25 years after mainstream media covered the science of the greenhouse effects and the challenge ahead of human beings in terms of taking responsibility for our impacts on climate—the six to seven billion souls on earth and the technology we have—denial of science and facts remains resilient.

The Palaszczuk government's restoration of tree-clearing laws is not extreme. It is a return to common-sense regulation of bulldozing of our vegetation here in Queensland. After the Beattie government laws came into effect 15 years ago or so—I think in 1999—did the Queensland economy tank? Was there a mass migration off the land by farmers? Did the Queensland economy collapse into recession? Of course it did not. In fact, it thrived. It went from strength to strength as Queenslanders adjusted to sensible laws that took into account our environment. We now see nearly 70,000 Queenslanders employed because of the great natural beauty of the Great Barrier Reef, which is under threat of inaction from this parliament tonight.

These conditions of our reef are contributing to coral bleaching at a time when scientific surveys have confirmed that 93 per cent of the reef is affected by some degree of bleaching. Strengthening the vegetation management legislation to protect remnant and high-value regrowth vegetation, including riparian zones along watercourses, is an action supporting our joint state Commonwealth Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. It is a very important part of it.

It was just over 12 months ago that the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Environment went to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee to get the Great Barrier Reef off the endangered list, yet here we are facing inaction from this House. If this parliament fails to pass this bill, what message are we sending the rest of the world about our commitment to our environment and to the Great Barrier Reef? History and Queenslanders will judge this current parliament harshly if we fail to pass these laws tonight. Let us look at the numbers: 296,000 hectares of land were cleared in 2014-15 and yet if we go back to 2010-11 it was only 91,000. The numbers are there; they do not lie. What we see from the LNP is their typical behaviour: they say one thing—they say they protect the environment, and yet they do nothing. They do not act on their rhetoric and that should be condemned. It is a rejection of science. It is a case of here we go again.

Bjelke-Petersen would be proud of the LNP's position here tonight. The Liberal Party is dead and buried. The true Liberal Party that might have stood up for some half-decent environment laws are dead and smothered by the National Party, who have taken them over holus-bolus and sold out the environment here in Queensland. There are no true Liberals in this place. It is a poor track record. If this bill fails it will not be a tragedy for this government; it will be a tragedy for Queensland's environment. It will be a tragedy for our biodiversity. It will be a tragedy for the reef.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: They can interject all they like. They do not like to hear the truth. It is an issue that will not go away. Queenslanders will be dismayed to hear if we do not pass this bill and they will want action. Action on tree clearing is inevitable whether it is tonight or in the future, but it is better for our environment if it is tonight. The parliament has a very important decision to make.

I am proud of this Palaszczuk Labor government's action to stop tree clearing. I am proud to be part of Queensland Labor which has acted consistently for 17 years on this issue and we will continue to act consistently with principles, science and vigour.

We will be up-front with our policy. We will not hide our policy. We will not deceive Queenslanders like the LNP did before the 2012 election. We will back science, we will back action on climate change and we will be up-front about it. We will not skulk around with our policy like the opposition did. Why am I confident? Because action is needed. It is the only course forward. What we will see is continuing impacts on our reef, continuing extremities of our environment with inaction, and people will increasingly demand action. It is better for us to pass this bill tonight. Let's get on with it. Let's join the 21st century again and protect our reef—

(Time expired)