




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2016

MOTION: VEGETATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (6.16 pm): I rise to speak both against the motion from the member for Dalrymple and the amendment from the member for Hinchinbrook. I oppose both as Queensland's environment minister and as the person who is currently charged with the responsibility to care for and protect Queensland's environment.

Of all of the fronts on which those opposite sought to trash Queensland's environment, the worst was what they did on vegetation management. They did not just allow more tree clearing; they actively encouraged it. This was after they inherited good laws that had seen land clearing drop to around 80,000 hectares at great expense to taxpayers. Taxpayers had compensated landholders for the impact of their laws, but then barely a day after the member for Hinchinbrook was elected he backflipped on the promise they made to the people of Queensland. He said that existing laws would not be enforced, existing investigations would be canned and that any existing charges would be dropped.

An opposition member: Be careful what you say because it is on *Hansard*.

Dr MILES: It was in *Country Life*.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, if you want to rise on a point of order you are able to. This is not an opportunity for a debate across the chamber.

Dr MILES: I do not know why he hates trees so much! Barely a moment after that statement, you could hear the tractors and bulldozers start. By the time they had finished, land clearing had almost tripled—300,000 hectares every year. To put that into perspective, that is 360,000 Rugby League football fields every single year.

Why do we think it matters? There are three main reasons. The first is that our forests and our trees provide habitat for our native Australian species. A report released last week showed that that clearing had included 40,000 hectares of habitat for the vulnerable koala species. So while those opposite were running around claiming to be protecting koalas, they were overseeing the destruction of koala habitat, putting extra pressure on our koalas.

Opposition members interjected.

Dr MILES: They do not just hate trees; they also hate koalas!

The second reason it matters is the Great Barrier Reef and the very many Queenslanders who love the reef and rely on it for their livelihoods. It is riparian vegetation that holds riverbanks together, that keeps sediment on land and out of the Great Barrier Reef. A third of the clearing was in reef catchments. There is a 50 per cent increase.

The third reason it matters is that trees and forests keep the air that we breathe clean. One of the things they take out of the air is carbon dioxide. I know that those opposite like to deny it, but Queensland is now responsible for 90 per cent of the country's emissions from land use. Some

36 million tonnes of emissions every year are caused by land clearing. That more than wipes out the Commonwealth government's very expensive and very ineffective direct action fund—billions of taxpayers' dollars. It puts in doubt our ability to meet our international targets. At a time when the rest of the world is reducing their emissions, Queensland is driving Australia's emissions up thanks to the LNP's land-clearing laws.

Labor committed to return to sound protections for habitat in Queensland for the sake of the Great Barrier Reef, for the sake of our native flora and fauna and for the sake of our climate. We will implement our promise. We will bring back laws, regardless of this motion from the member for Dalrymple and the even more reckless amendment from the member for Hinchinbrook.