




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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**LAND ACCESS OMBUDSMAN BILL; GASFIELDS COMMISSION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (8.29 pm): I rise to address the Land Access Ombudsman Bill 2017 and the Gasfields Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 cognate debate. I want to pick up from where the shadow minister left off. When I was the shadow minister for the environment in 2011, it is fair to say one of the things that was giving me a lot of sleepless nights was the coal seam gas industry. I honestly thought that on winning the 2012 election and becoming the minister for environment the industry would continue to cause me a lot of sleepless nights for the entire length of that term.

Whilst at that stage we had an extremely well-established industry, what we did not have was an industry that had a social licence to operate, an industry that understood the landowners' rights and requirements and expectations around basically being treated as human beings, an industry that did not quite yet have the support of the broader community. It was on a knife edge. It really was on a knife edge. Whilst we will hear the other side crow about how it was them who got the industry going, where they left it in 2012 was very concerning.

I want to pay particular credit to the then deputy premier, the member for Callide, for the role he played in developing policies that we as a team were able to implement from 2012 onwards. One of those key policies was the establishment of the GasFields Commission. As the then minister for environment, it was a great pleasure to be working alongside someone of the calibre of John Cotter in that role as he sought to work with the gas industry, work with the agricultural industries, work with the councils and work with individual landholders to get that social licence to operate, to get that balance right when it comes to dealing with individual farmers, individual property owners, and their expectations.

I can honestly say that it was not 12 months later that I quickly realised that an issue that I thought was going to be keeping me awake at night as the minister for environment was no longer keeping me awake. I must admit that I had far more sleepless nights worrying about crocodiles, flying foxes and koalas than I did about the coal seam gas industry. I want to pay respect to the member for Callide for the role he played.

I want to disagree a little with the member for Hinchinbrook because what he failed to do was acknowledge the role that he, too, played in establishing the GasFields Commission and ensuring that the coal seam gas industry rebalanced the work they were doing, particularly on the Darling Downs. They rebalanced their approach to landholders. They started investing in the communities in terms of that social licence to operate that they really needed. I acknowledge the extraordinary hard work of the member for Hinchinbrook in doing that.

He and I had a shared compliance role around the gas industry. I think that too demonstrated that, whilst we were here to assist a fledgling industry get on its feet, create jobs and export gas, we were also very serious about ensuring that not only the safety of their petroleum and gas operations but also their respect for the environment was paramount. Again, an issue that I thought would continue to

percolate through our term in government quickly evaporated as we took that strong approach—one where we worked with the industry to ensure that they had the appropriate level of regulation. We also made it very clear that when they did not meet those expectations around that regulation they would be taken to task for it. Again, I give commendation to the member for Hinchinbrook for the extraordinary amount of work he did in those three years as the minister for natural resources and mines.

I want to conclude by suggesting to our southern colleagues, particularly those in New South Wales and Victoria, that they have really missed an opportunity. What we did in the LNP during those three years was give them a framework of how you can have responsible development of a gas industry alongside agricultural industries and alongside the environment. At the moment we hear this phrase that we have a gas shortage. We do not have a gas shortage. There is plenty of it in this nation.

Mr Cripps: Heaps of it.

Mr POWELL: Heaps of it—more than we need. There is so much more that we could export, but it is all locked up because our southern colleagues in New South Wales and Victoria have failed to learn from the lessons here in Queensland. They failed to take on board the incredibly sensible, pragmatic, community focused solutions like the GasFields Commission, replicate them and grow the gas industry in those jurisdictions. There could be gas coming out of those fields in New South Wales and Victoria right now. There could be more jobs—as much as I hate to say it—being created in New South Wales and Victoria right now. The pressure on our electricity market could be significantly less if those gas fields were being developed, but they did not have the courage and they did not have the intelligence to do what we had done and take sensible steps to establish a GasFields Commission that served as an interface between the resources industries and the landholders and the local communities.

Whilst I acknowledge that what we are debating tonight will see a gradual diminution in the responsibilities of that commission—because, let us face it, it has been a huge success; it has basically worked itself out of a job—I want to pay respect to the men, particularly the member for Callide and the member for Hinchinbrook, who were instrumental in its establishment and to the men and women who served on it and will continue to serve on it. I also acknowledge the role that the landholders, the primary producers, and the councils had in working with that commission for it to succeed so that we could demonstrate to the rest of the world that having resource industries alongside agricultural industries whilst protecting the environment is absolutely and utterly achievable.