




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

Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tree Clearing

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (2.24 pm): Each year Queensland government scientists prepare a report detailing land clearing in Queensland. They use satellite data and ground truth suspected clearing to rule out other causes of forest loss. The previous LNP government refused to release those reports.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Dr MILES: That is after it promised not to change tree-clearing laws but went ahead and took an axe to them anyway. The report for 2015-16 released last week shows land clearing in Queensland has skyrocketed to 395,000 hectares per year. In Great Barrier Reef catchments the rate has soared by almost 50 per cent. Excessive clearing has quadrupled since Tim Nicholls and the LNP tore up Labor's sensible laws.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Dr MILES: Clearing in Queensland is now at a rate of 1,000 football fields every day thanks to the LNP. This will drive native wildlife to extinction, risk the tens of thousands of jobs—

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Member for Hinchinbrook, your interjections are not being taken. You are warned under standing order 253A. I find that you are trying to talk over the top of the minister in his statement. If you persist, I will take the appropriate action.

Dr MILES: This will drive native wildlife to extinction, risk the tens of thousands of jobs reliant on the Great Barrier Reef and drive up Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. According to the scientific review of impacts of land clearing, land clearing is putting pressure on many of the 739 threatened flora species and 210 threatened fauna species in Queensland. In 2015-16, 35 per cent of clearing was of remnant vegetation—that is, pristine vegetation that has never been cleared before and is vital habitat for native wildlife. Clearing at these rates leaves animals with nowhere to live and nowhere to go. When you rip trees out of the ground in reef catchments, it means the soil and run-off from erosion flows straight on to the reef, smothering and suffocating the coral. A key commitment of the Australian and Queensland governments in the Reef 2050 Plan—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I would prefer not to put you under a warning but if you persist I will, and that applies to members on the government side who are responding to those comments.

Dr MILES: A key commitment of the Australian and Queensland governments in the Reef 2050 Plan is to reduce land clearing. That is the same plan the LNP has, in the past, claimed credit for. This is the plan that stopped UNESCO putting the reef on the in-danger list. In this year's report the World

Heritage Committee singled out the lack of progress on delivering important laws to reduce clearing and called for greater effort to implement this commitment. Today I have written to the Turnbull government asking it to reassure the global community that both governments remain committed to the plan, and I table a copy of that letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 10 October 2017, from the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef, Hon. Dr Steven Miles, to the Federal Minister for the Environment and Energy, Hon. Josh Frydenberg, regarding the latest Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) report [\[1987\]](#).

I have also asked Minister Frydenberg to explain to the World Heritage Committee how the Australian government would implement its reef plan if an LNP-One Nation government was elected in Queensland, because we know that only the Palaszczuk government will keep the reef off the in-danger list. An LNP-One Nation government would risk putting it back in danger—just like the last time the LNP was in charge.