




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 1 March 2017

**SUGAR INDUSTRY (ARBITRATION FOR MILL OWNERS AND SUGAR
MARKETING ENTITIES) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.46 pm), in reply: I am grateful to everyone for their contribution. I mean that I am grateful to those on the government side for their contribution because now we clearly know where they stand. They have nailed their colours to the mast. With all of their contributions—the personal attacks, all of the vitriol, all of their little rehearsed lines that they came out with—they have clearly nailed their colours to the mast. Not once in this debate has anyone found fault with the legislation that is before the House. Not once was a clause discussed. Not once was a subclause referred to. Not once did they say, ‘This will not work for this reason.’ Not once did they say, ‘The 2015 legislation has been ineffective for this reason.’ We have heard lots of spouting, we have heard lots of histrionics, we have heard the Minister for Agriculture—and that is an oxymoron when you put it beside the words ‘member for Rockhampton’—say that the world will come to an end. This amazing convert to the principles of free market and the reports of the Productivity Commission ignores the Productivity Commission when it says that the cost of power will be going up by \$10 billion. Guess who will be paying the cost of that power? Canegrowers will be paying it as they pay more for pumping their water and the headlong rush to this government’s crazy 50 per cent renewable energy target.

All across the government were they talking about the Productivity Commission when that report came out? Of course they were not! Were they talking about the free market and the operation of the private sector when the Minister for Housing and Public Works cancelled the Logan Renewal Initiative and stopped 2,600 homes being built and put 400 people out of work? Of course not! Were they worried about the free market when they whacked an extra 8,000 public servants on for no appreciable increase in service delivery? Of course they were not! Were they worried about an efficient and effective delivery of services when they kowtowed to the Rail, Tram and Bus Union in relation to the South-East Queensland rail fail? Of course they were not!

We see crocodile tears indeed when we hear the Labor Party members say that they believe in the way that the free market operates. They talked about what happens down in Canberra, but did they mention Bill Shorten and the way that he sold out the cleaners? Was there any mention of that by the Minister for Agriculture? We heard not a word. They talk about workers. I heard the member for Maryborough, unfortunately, talking about workers. Did he mention the fact that the leader of the Labor Party sat with Dick Pratt in Toorak, sipping on Cristal, as he signed away the rights of workers? Absolutely not! All we heard from the member for Rockhampton and Minister for Agriculture was a rant. That is all I can say about it. It is not deserving of any more comment than that. It was a rant and nothing else. The member for Hinchinbrook dealt with that.

In contrast, the member for Burdekin gave a measured speech in which he detailed the significance of the impact on his community. He spoke about the families that for three years have been living with the stress and strain of these circumstances not being addressed. He outlined the need for urgency in relation to addressing this matter straightaway.

The member for Hinchinbrook has more knowledge about cane in one of his fingers than the entire department under this minister. Why does he know about it? Because he lives it! His family have worked in it. He works and lives in those communities and he has represented them fearlessly since 2006. He is not a Johnny-come-lately to the scene. He is not a head shaker or a pretender. He has fought for those communities, year in and year out.

In her contribution, the member for Nanango went through the provisions of the sugar act in some considerable detail and outlined exactly what the problem is, which is that there must be a cane supply agreement. The fundamental is that there must be a cane supply agreement, which is something that all on the side seem to have completely and utterly overlooked. There must be a cane supply agreement.

Therefore, we reach the fundamental nub of the matter: despite the rants, despite the histrionics, despite the lack of content and despite any rational or reasonable argument, those opposite will continue to blindly adhere to the dictates of a multinational out of Singapore. They will oppose the best interests of Queensland and Queensland canefarmers and they will risk their families, their livelihoods and their futures. We in the LNP will not stand for that. We will put Queensland first.

I want to deal with the issues raised by the member for Dalrymple. I listened carefully to what the member for Dalrymple said. I listened as he foreshadowed his amendment. In the member's explanation there was one short statement about the amendment, which has been circulated and I have looked at it. However, it is not clear that any case has been made in relation to the amendment. The member will have the chance to move the amendment and he may take that opportunity to explain it, what it will mean, where it has come from and what impact it will have. Having received the amendment very late in the piece makes it extremely difficult to make a decision on it. Therefore, I invite the member for Dalrymple, at the time of moving the amendment, to give us a clear understanding of it if he wishes to gain some support. I ask him to explain what it means and what its legal impact will be.

I repeat: this legislation is about putting Queensland and Queenslanders first. This is not about the mealy-mouthed subservience that we heard from the Minister for Agriculture. It is about delivering real results and, having made a commitment, keeping that commitment. That commitment was made to the people who turned up at the Burdekin Theatre in Ayr, the people who turned up in the Herbert River district and those canegrowers and millers from Mackay who travelled for three and a half hours to be at the meeting at the Burdekin Theatre. Those meetings in Ayr and the Herbert River district were probably the biggest meetings of canegrowers that have been held in decades in relation to this matter. I thank them for what they have done. I acknowledge their continued fight for their industry. I let them know that we stand with them on this fight.