




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.48 pm): I am disappointed and I am frustrated that we are back in this House again debating vegetation management laws. In my time alone as the member for Glass House we did it in 2009, and after sensible changes in 2013 we were back in 2016. Now here we are again in 2018. If I am frustrated and disappointed I cannot begin to imagine what Queensland farmers are feeling. When I was a student I was taught that Queensland was built on the sheep's back. As the sheep made way for beef, cane, grain, cotton and agriculture, Queensland continues to be built on agriculture. Why are those opposite determined to destroy our agricultural heritage, destroy present agricultural production and destroy future agricultural opportunity?

This bill might as well be called the anti-Queensland food and fibre bill, because that is exactly what those opposite are hell-bent on achieving. Unlike them, I want to continue to see Queensland wool. I want to see Queensland lamb, Queensland beef, Queensland sugar, Queensland bananas, Queensland pineapples, Queensland strawberries and Queensland cotton. I find it appalling and it galls me that, because of similar laws in other areas, we already import seafood from Vietnam and pineapples from the Philippines. Indeed, I find it hypocritical that whilst we sit here in this state, in this country, and say 'no more' and call for tougher and stricter environmental laws, we put the responsibility of growing food and fibre onto countries that do not already have our high environmental standards and farmers who have consistently demonstrated that they know how to manage and protect the environment because if they do not, their future production, their future opportunities and their families' economic development ceases to exist.

We can stick our heads in the sand and say that we are saving the planet by supporting laws such as these, but we are not: we are achieving the opposite. The government is putting the challenge of balancing agricultural production on the shoulders of those who cannot and have not been able to demonstrate the same capabilities that we have here in Queensland. Markets such as Indonesia will begin clearing rainforest to try and graze the beef they can no longer buy from Queensland. I dread to think where and who will have to grow the cotton, grain and cane to supplement what we are losing from Queensland. I can assure you, as I have said before, that it will not be a state or a nation whose laws are already some of the toughest in the world when it comes to protecting the environment or whose farmers care more and have a demonstrated history of protecting the land they work.

I commend the member for Condamine and the shadow minister, the member for Burdekin, for the contributions they have already made and for the contributions they have made to the consideration of the legislation through the committee process. I would like to focus on two aspects, one of which the member for Condamine already mentioned. There is an acronym going around: SLATS. Basically, SLATS is the way we measure land cover and trees across the state of Queensland. Unfortunately, because of the direction of this government, it only considers tree clearing—loss of vegetation. During committee hearings the question was rightly asked, 'Why aren't you mapping regrowth?' I will read into

Hansard some of the evidence from that committee hearing. I refer to what Mr Dan Tindall, Acting Science Leader, Remote Sensing Centre, stated in reply to a question regarding regrowth mapping. He said—

I think it is a valid criticism. The SLATS program has only ever really had a mandate to map clearing up until this point. The government is committed now and we are looking at addressing this in the near future. I must admit that the mapping of regrowth is a very difficult thing to do. The way that we map clearing with the satellite imagery, there are indices and things like that that help us find those detections. Regrowth is a much more subtle beast in terms of the nuances of it changing over time, as Dr Neldner referred to, in terms of thickening and those sorts of processes. We are starting to think about how we address that and also how we address mapping of woody extent in the state so that we can tell the complete picture.

The member for Gregory, Mr Millar, asked—

Could we possibly see an increase in vegetation—more trees grown in Queensland—once this technology is hopefully adopted? Is the position that we might see an increase in trees rather than a decrease?

Mr Tindall replied, 'The possibility exists.'

This shows how inexact this science is. We cannot compare apples with apples if all we are looking at is tree clearing rather than regrowth. Let me give members a very poignant example. Many members know that I represent the seat of Glass House. My electorate office is based in Maleny. Maleny is a very green and lovely town; everyone goes up there to enjoy the green hills and the wonderful vegetation. This is what it looked like 100 years ago. There is not a tree in sight. Guess what: trees grow. I table those photos for the record.

Tabled paper: Bundle of photographs depicting changing landscape in Maleny [\[576\]](#).

If we are going to make laws to try and assess the amount of vegetation in this state, we cannot look at just one side of the equation. We must look at both sides of the equation. Making laws that do not consider the regrowth which is already occurring is simply not acceptable.

The other aspect of the bill I would like to focus on is the reach of these laws. In South-East Queensland many of us have been saying for years that this is something that happens up in the west and north, but not anymore. By this government including in these laws the Burnett-Mary catchment, all of a sudden the electorate of Glass House has a very intimate and real role to play in the implementation of this farcical legislation. Primary producers in Kidaman Creek, Kenilworth, Cambroom, Conondale, Harpers Creek, Elaman Creek, Curramore, Wittia, North Maleny, Maleny, Reesville, Booroobin, Bellthorpe, Obi Obi, Mapleton, Flaxton, Montville and Balmoral Ridge will now all be impacted by these laws.

Mr Bennett: That's a long way from the reef!

Mr POWELL: I take the interjection from the member for Burnett. It is a heck of a way from the Great Barrier Reef. I want to return to a point made by the member for Condamine. The satellite imagery is poor. It cannot distinguish between a native tree and a weed species. Guess what already exists along just about every single one of those watercourses in the upper Mary catchment: weeds! It might look like a beautiful green tree, but guess what: it is a camphor laurel. The same environmentalists who say we need these laws to protect the planet are asking us to cut down those trees. An oxymoron exists before we even start.

I want to end where I began. I am frustrated and disappointed, but more so I am concerned about how frustrated and disappointed Queensland farmers and the communities that rely on them are feeling right now. This morning I caught up with farmers who were out in front of state parliament and I met the Agars from Wyandra. They are primary producers who made it pretty clear to me that when these laws come in you can kiss food and fibre production in their part of the world goodbye. I also met the Heinemanns—

Ms Leahy: That's my baker.

Mr POWELL:—bakers from Charleville. The flow-on effect of destroying agricultural production in places like Wyandra and around Charleville means that small business operators in Charleville also lose their wellbeing. Mrs Heinemann was holding up a sign that said 'stop bullying farming families'. Stop bullying farming families. For the sake of our farming communities and the future of food and fibre production now and into the future in the state of Queensland, vote this legislation down.