



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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### **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (6.43 pm): It is interesting to hear the member for Mackay reading out a departmental speech, because she has never really understood a lot of the things that occur with vegetation management.

**Mrs GILBERT:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Warrego is telling lies there. It is not a departmental speech.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Robinson): First of all, the member needs to withdraw that statement about an accusation of lying. It is unparliamentary.

**Mrs GILBERT:** The member—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** First of all, member for Mackay, I am instructing you to withdraw that statement of calling the member a liar.

**Mrs GILBERT:** Yes; I withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It seems that you find the member's comments offensive and would ask for them to be withdrawn. Is that your point of order?

**Mrs GILBERT:** I do, yes.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member has taken offence and I would ask for the comments to be withdrawn.

**Ms LEAHY:** I withdraw. I rise to oppose the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill—this legislation—will cause catastrophic economic impacts on the hardworking food and fibre producers and the rural and regional communities in my electorate. This is a massive assault on property rights and it is a totally unprovoked attack on farmers and their families. This legislation is precisely what happens when Labor is aided into majority government with the help of One Nation and Katter party preferences. Even in my own seat of Warrego, the Katter party preferenced the ALP ahead of the LNP. Farmers cannot trust the minor parties: they say one thing in the bush and they do the opposite when it comes to preferences.

It is so true: no farmers, no food, and food should not be political. These farmers pass on their farms from one generation to the next. Today outside the House we saw Jacqui and Cameron Tickell with their children and Jacqui's dad. That is three generations of one family involved in agriculture, and very successfully I might add. I want to speak of another child in my electorate—Hailey Chiconi from Taylor's Plains north of Mungallala. Hailey is four years old. In her submission to the parliamentary committee she said—

We want to stop the bad people from stopping us from feeding the cows.

When a four-year-old understands the impact of this legislation, it beggars belief that those members opposite do not understand it. This legislation will force up the cost of food—food like blueberries, melons, table grapes, onions, garlic and carrots that are all grown in my electorate—and

God knows what it will do to the future of the price of a steak or a leg of lamb. It is not just my electorate that will be affected. One only has to read the Property Council or UDIA submissions to this bill to see what they say when they talk about how it will affect housing affordability in the south-east corner and the impact that it will have on lending decisions made by financial institutions. What do members opposite say to their constituents about how this legislation will impact on housing affordability and the costs of living?

Today Scott and Adma Sargood travelled down to Brisbane to join their fellow farmers outside this House, and I want to thank Scott and Adma for what they are doing to provide facts and education about vegetation management and for the efforts that they have put in in circulating the parliamentary petition which seriously protests against these laws. Over 15,000 people signed the petition initiated by Scott Sargood and it was tabled in the House today. That petition was only out for 77 days, therefore 200 people per day made their protest by signing that petition. They are angry. They feel betrayed by this Labor government.

They are already battling the drought and some have been battling that drought for over five years, and some have been using mulga for that length of time just to keep their stock alive and now this—restrictions and more paperwork while they are trying to feed their stock. They are trying to manage their property and landscape during a drought. I have no doubt we will see additional pressure on families brought about by this legislation. Some, unfortunately, will not be able to cope. There will be more mental health issues and I urge anyone who feels that they are not coping well because of this legislation to seek help and I urge them to talk to their local general practitioner.

These petitioners—the 15,000 people—are asking for workable and practical vegetation management laws to ensure that land management is undertaken in a properly regulated manner that also protects the biodiversity of the region. Many of them use mulga not just during the drought time; they use mulga as part of their yearly management plan. Mulga is like a haystack. It is not something where farmers just go along and decide, 'We're going to clear this.' It is actually part of their ongoing property management plan. There is one thing for sure: those people are certainly not getting anything workable or practical from this legislation when it comes to the management of those mulga lands, which, I might add, have not really had that amount of mulga. The mulga has built up over years and years. The seed bed is quite incredible and has thickened dramatically.

It might be of interest to some of the members opposite to know that, when the Cobb and Co coaches used to go through Charleville, they had to carry hessian because there were not enough large trees for people to go behind to go to the toilet. I will leave it to members' imagination, but in those early years there just were not the trees out there.

I am already aware of reports of families leaving communities such as Charleville because they can see the forthcoming economic impact on local jobs in those towns. Those people have lost confidence in this government. I refer to butchers such as Dunnes Meats in Charleville. I can tell members that Zorro is really worried about the impact that these laws will have on all businesses in the town of Charleville. I share his concerns, because already families have packed up and left. Donna and Laurie Heinemann, who are bakers in Charleville, were here today at the protest. They are really concerned about the impact that these vegetation management laws will have on their business, as are stores such as DJs and Western Rural at Charleville, Midwest Rural at Roma and Wallumbilla and people such as Trevor Mead and the Paulsen brothers who have grocery stores at Quilpie. They and many other small business operators right across South-West Queensland and my electorate are really worried about the future of their communities, because they can see the economic impact coming from this vegetation management legislation.

What did this state Labor government do about the regulatory impact statement—or any economic impact statement? During the committee hearings, after questions were asked by the member for Buderim, we heard that the state Labor government said that it did not have any economic modelling on the impacts of this legislation on the agricultural industry nor would it do any economic modelling in relation to this legislation. What a way to treat a massive industry such as the agricultural industry! How insulting is that! This government has failed to conduct its due diligence. It has not done a regulatory impact statement. When it was asked whether it should do it, it thinks, 'Oh, we couldn't possibly do that. It might lead to additional clearing,' which is a total, absolute load of rubbish.

This government's answer to consultation was an absolute sham. In my electorate we saw that firsthand. That consultation went for seven weeks with Easter in the middle. On the day before Easter, there was a hearing in Charleville. What an insult! Not one hearing was conducted in the Brigalow Belt. Just two hours in Charleville were given for people in the whole of Southern Queensland to put forward their concerns. There were people in Charleville who wanted to speak, but they could not because the committee ran out of time. It was absolutely appalling. Furthermore, the witnesses at that committee

hearing gave some very good recommendations about the codes and the economic impact, only to be ignored by the Labor controlled committee. It was absolutely appalling. It was absolutely disgraceful and a disgraceful way to treat my constituents.

How would the members opposite feel if the state government passed legislation with no consultation and went ahead and took out the kitchens in the homes in the suburbs of their electorates and then said, 'Your family can stay living there. They can pay the mortgage, but they can't use the kitchen and we won't compensate you.' That is precisely what this legislation does to my constituents. It takes away their ability to manage sustainably the vegetation without compensation. It says, 'You can keep paying for the devalued asset.' In fact, this legislation does that to 1.7 million hectares in Queensland with no compensation.

I have been listening to the contributions to this debate by some of those opposite and I have come to the conclusion that they do not know how to use a map and a compass. They also do not know how to read a map, especially when it comes to river catchments. If we follow the arguments put by the members opposite in their contributions about the Great Barrier Reef catchments and that there should be vegetation management restrictions in the reef catchments, then 75 per cent of Queensland should not be subjected to this legislation. Only 25 per cent of Queensland's landmass drains into the Great Barrier Reef. For those members opposite who are challenged by geography, I point out that the other 75 per cent drains to the Murray-Darling Basin, the mighty Eyre catchment and through to the Cooper Creek or gulf catchments.

**An opposition member:** That's irrelevant.

**Ms LEAHY:** I will take that interjection—

*(Time expired)*