




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (CLEARING CODES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (6.09 pm): I rise to support the disallowance motion moved by the shadow minister for natural resources and mines on the vegetation management clearing codes. Firstly, I want to acknowledge the constituents of my electorate who will be watching this debate and many of them have been outstanding managers of mulga through fodder harvesting for generations. The utilisation of mulga trees to provide fodder for domestic stock during drought has been part of routine management on many grazing enterprises in south-west Queensland's mulga lands for over 100 years—before the term 'climate change' even existed. If landholders were mismanaging mulga, surely after 100 years there would be none left. The reality is that there is more mulga now than ever before. Landholders and farmers are angry and frustrated and disappointed, not because of the relenting drought conditions but because of the hostile state Labor government that has imposed restrictive, unworkable, impractical and unbalanced regulations with regard to fodder harvesting and thinning.

Mulga fodder harvesting is not tree clearing. I will say that again for members opposite who have a warped and illogical view on vegetation management: mulga fodder harvesting is not tree clearing and, for the benefit of one of the earlier speakers, there is not too much mulga that grows in the Great Barrier Reef catchments either. There is plenty of science to prove this and it is all being ignored by this Labor government. To overregulate mulga fodder harvesting under the guise of ending broadscale tree clearing is wrong, it is not backed by science and it is downright deceit from this government.

Fodder harvesting of mulga is about managing the cycle of vegetation regeneration. To put it simply, it is like mowing the lawn. Like the lawn, the mulga is still out there after it has been cut. It regrows, it regenerates and, in many cases, it regenerates more mulga than ever before. I have some photos with me that show how quickly mulga regenerates and thickens. The first photo was taken on a property 40 kilometres east of Wyandra in my electorate, and I will table it for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Photographs depicting growth on land in 1957, 1994 and 2001 [[1282](#)].

In 1957 the area was grassland. In 1994 the mulga was well up over your head. In 2001 the mulga was as thick as the hairs on a dog's back. In 40 years, without restrictions, the mulga had regenerated. We have heard contributions from members opposite about their belief that farmers can push mulga to feed their stock. What this Labor government is begrudgingly allowing landholders to do is to utilise a couple of pot plants when really there is a need for a workable and flexible process that enables them to manage thousands of hectares of mulga.

For the benefit of members opposite, let us look at how this government has smashed balanced laws for ideology in a process that has made restrictions that are unworkable and impractical. Let us look at that set area limit per notification of 500 hectares per lot. I am sorry to say, but the mulga trees just did not quite get the memo. They do not know about growing in a perfect 500-hectare plot. Their cover and their density varies. During the South West Strategy many lots were amalgamated and some properties are one lot, so therefore they have to go back and make multiple harvesting notifications. There are landholders who are pushing 300 hectares a fortnight, so they are continually making notifications. This is this Labor government's restriction and it is this Labor government's green tape.

In terms of the modification of the maximum strip width from 135 metres that can be fodder harvested to 50 metres, when we look at a 500-hectare lot the yield, taking into account the strips, is about 250 hectares. This government is being very slippery with the truth and the amount of fodder that can be harvested. Let us talk about that introduction of the self-audit process. I am advised that this consumes about five hours of office time—provided the internet is working—with the government notification processes and at least another hour out in the paddock to mark out the GPS points. That is Labor green tape and it is theft of landholder time.

With regard to the online application process, one can only continue to fodder harvest after approval has been given. That was certainly not the case under the self-assessable codes under the LNP. The thickening code has been abolished under this Labor government. Thickening of mulga is no longer recognised. Permits for thinning have to be undertaken through the Integrated Planning Act at a cost of \$3,000 per application, not to mention that it might cost \$10,000 for a consultant to complete the paperwork. If you have thickening in mulga, which many do, welcome to this Labor government's expensive and lengthy permit process. Landholders certainly did not have to do that under the LNP and there is no doubt that the minister has been untruthful with his misleading myth-busting drivel that has been coming through in his press releases.

This is a time of drought when there are feed shortages throughout the eastern state and it is heartbreaking to see a bale in every mulga tree that landholders just cannot access because of this hostile government. This restrictive and unworkable regulatory regime impacts not only on farmers trying to keep their stock alive but flows right through to the stockmen, the women, the fencing contractors, the small businesses, the local butcher, the tool shops, the feed supplier, the general store, to name a few.

Here with me tonight I have correspondence sent from my constituents the Sargoods, the McInnerneys and the Camerons to the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. My constituents are very disappointed with this minister given that his office has referred their correspondence back to me to respond to. My office received a covering note stating—

Please find letter below from one of your constituents. I have let them know that I have forwarded to your office for follow-up.

Don't you worry about that, Minister: I will follow-up, and I will follow-up and make sure there is an apology to the Sargoods, an apology to the McInnerneys and an apology to the Camerons who have raised valid concerns and questions about how that minister will vote on this disallowance motion. These constituents were asking this minister to vote in favour of this disallowance motion. Instead of answering their questions, his office flicked that correspondence to me. With all the resources of the minister's office and the government, it seems that his office thinks I am better at answering his correspondence. Do not worry: I will certainly give them a response, but the minister should give them an apology for the tardy way he has handled their concerns.

These regulations tell us that this Labor government has no regard for science, no regard for constituent concerns, no understanding of property management, no understanding of the thickening process of mulga in Queensland, and no understanding of land management in a balanced way that protects the environment and enables sustainable production of stock and land management. I read in *Hansard* the questions that the member for Ipswich West asked. At least he has grown something in pot plants, which is more than what some of his colleagues have done. I read the questions that he asked and I look forward to him crossing the floor and supporting this disallowance motion, because I know that he knows this regulation is wrong. I can read that in his questions.