



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.15 pm): Today I rise to speak to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. I begin by acknowledging the committee secretariat who worked tirelessly on this bill and my fellow committee members. I particularly acknowledge my LNP colleagues, the member for Bundaberg, who just spoke, Mr David Batt, and the member for Condamine, Mr Pat Weir.

This legislation is fundamentally flawed and it should not be passed. At its heart, this legislation is based on toxic ideology rather than fact. Those opposite have been motivated by self-interest rather than the best interests of Queensland. That is clear because we saw this bill introduced to the House in March and here we are, just over a month later, as those opposite rush through this legislation, effectively ignoring the submissions of 13,000 Queenslanders who attempted to have their say.

As the committee travelled briefly across the state to receive submissions on the bill, we heard heartbreaking stories about the effect that the bill will have on farmers and communities. Families told of their despair and of their fear that the property that they had sustainably farmed for generations may no longer be viable. In communities such as Charleville, people told of their fears that this bill will result in the degradation and destruction of their homes. Labor members of the committee continue to support this bill, despite the fact that they know it is flawed and that it does not take into account the damage that it will do to farmers and our rural communities.

The time has come for the Labor members of this committee, the members for Bancroft, Mount Ommaney and Ipswich West, to stand up and do what is right. The farmers of Queensland need someone in the government to listen to their concerns. Unlike the minister for agriculture, who has hidden from scrutiny since the introduction of this bill, at least the members for Bancroft, Mount Ommaney and Ipswich West have travelled the state. They know that this bill is flawed because they have seen the impact firsthand. They have heard from young families who have lost hope for a future in agriculture. They have seen grown men break down in front of them as they contemplate a future where their livelihood is destroyed. To simply ignore those concerns shows the contempt that Labor has for rural communities.

Therefore, my message to the members for Bancroft, Mount Ommaney and Ipswich West is simple: stand up for what you know is right, have some conviction, show some backbone, cross the floor and oppose this bill; save the rural communities and the farmers who feed and clothe you. I recognise that the members for Bancroft, Mount Ommaney and Ipswich West will suffer at the hands of their ignorant union masters if they do cross the floor, but standing up for what is right is never without a cost and they should do what is right.

Perhaps those opposite cannot understand why Queenslanders are so concerned about these laws. Why are rural people and their city cousins so concerned about the impact that these laws will have on those who feed and clothe us? I guess it is understandable that those opposite would be ignorant, when we consider that their agriculture minister is a figurehead in Brisbane who rarely

ventures out of the comfort of his office to speak to the people who are impacted most by his decisions. I have been teaching my children about how their actions impact on other people and how they need to consider the needs of others and not just themselves. My three-year-old can grasp that, but seemingly those men and women who sit in the privileged position of government cannot. That is quite simply appalling.

Given that those opposite have so little regard for the impact these laws will have on the people of the bush, allow me to enlighten them a little. Farmers and graziers put the food on their table. Later today when they enjoy the food put in front of them by the excellent catering staff here at parliament, just remember who put the food there. It was farmers—Queenslander farmers whose livelihoods are being put at risk by these laws and by decisions made by Labor members. It is clear that Labor are only interested in green preferences and that they ignore all of the science that should underpin any vegetation management legislation.

Government members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: That may be the case, but their ignorance of the science is disgraceful. One would think that the minister for agriculture would want to hear the concerns of those he represents in the agricultural sector, but he has been pathetically silent on this issue which is one of the most significant threats to agriculture in this state and one that clearly has rural communities and agricultural producers concerned. I wonder if Minister Furner has the courage to go back to the Hacon family in Cloncurry and explain to them why he intends to vote for this bill. If he had any moral courage he would front up and explain his position. The minister will not because he clearly does not care about the farmers of Queensland and he is only interested in where he can get a photograph opportunity.

Farmers and graziers are usually born on the land and they make their living and feed their families from the land. They nurture and protect it to pass it on to the next generation. At their heart they are the true environmentalists. I quote from Grant Maudsley, the President of AgForce Queensland, in his submission to the committee, where he said—

Mr Whiting: Another independent witness.

Mr MICKELBERG: You would do well to listen to him, member for Bancroft, because he does represent the farmers of Queensland who are a stakeholder when it comes to this piece of legislation. You failed to do so. That is why you will be condemned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member for Buderim, please speak through the chair and not directly across the chamber and do not use the word 'you'.

Mr MICKELBERG: My apologies. Mr Maudsley said—

We have to grow food for this state and we have to look after the environment. We accept that and we are proud to do that.

I come from a family of graziers. My mother's father and mother managed and owned cattle stations in Queensland and the Northern Territory, as did my grandfather's parents. I know the value of looking after the land, caring for our environment and farming sustainably. These are practices that I still apply today on my own small property where my wife and I are focused on managing our land sustainability while still running a commercial cattle operation. It is a simplification by those opposite to assume they know better than farmers when it comes to managing our rural environment. In fact, it is downright patronising.

I was very concerned to see that no modelling has been undertaken in relation to the effect this legislation will have on future agricultural production in Queensland. When questioned on this matter during committee hearings departmental officials admitted that no modelling had been undertaken and, staggeringly, none was planned. Despite the mountains of submissions this committee received from farmers and landholders raising this very concern, the Labor government still sees fit to ignore them.

We heard from fourth generation farmer Scott Dunlop, who outlined his concerns about the economic impacts of this bill. He said—

I think that economic modelling is extremely important. I do not think it has been considered at all how this is going to affect individual operations, which in turn is going to effect all communities. This legislation is going to cause a significant downturn in employment and the death of rural communities.

It is easy to dismiss that which people cannot see right before their eyes. Frankly, this Palaszczuk Labor government has no excuse. Not only are they paid by the taxpayers of Queensland to open their eyes and see the impact of their decisions, but through this very brief committee process we have seen through the more than 13,000 submissions from Queenslanders that they are trying their level best to be heard by this government.

The Premier this morning all but gloated about attending an official function in the bush to open a museum. One cannot just head out west for a photo opportunity, throw on an Akubra and consider oneself to be a friend of the bush. It might look good on a glossy brochure, but, frankly, Queenslanders see right through hollow gestures.

Farmers had the decency to come to our front door today and the Premier simply ignored them. Those opposite could have listened to Queensland farmers who have been trying to tell their stories. They could have come down to this morning's protest, showed some courage, showed some backbone and talked to the people whose livelihoods they will destroy. Those opposite had that opportunity and they have shown they simply do not care.

Queensland farmers deserve better. Queenslanders across the state deserve better. They deserve a government and a Premier who stands for the rights of all Queenslanders and does not hang them out to dry when it suits her. Queensland needs fair laws for farmers and this legislation should be rejected.