




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (6.39 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. When I came to this place I promised that I would deliver not only for the people of the Cook electorate but also for the generations of people who will live on Cape York and the Torres Strait not just until the next election but for the years to come. Some people say that we have to choose between protecting the environment and growing the economy of the cape, but I know that we can do both and we will do that together.

Over the past few weeks I have heard lots of people from outside the cape lecture me about what is good for the economic development of Cape York. To those politicians in Canberra, who have lots of free advice, let me give them some local advice from the cape: they cannot claim that they want to grow the Cape York economy when they are cutting funds for the construction industry, putting apprentices out of work, and cutting houses across the remote communities that I represent.

During the election, I made it clear that I am passionate about a strong, growing economy with jobs for locals and protecting our environment for the generations to come. This legislation is nothing new. Queensland had vegetation management laws in place from 2004 until 2013, when the Newman government scrapped laws that it promised to protect at the 2012 election. During the time those laws were in place, the Cook community continued to grow and prosper. I know it will be no different under the latest version of the legislation.

The government is committed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Cape York having opportunities to benefit from ecologically sustainable development on their land. Since 2007, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been able to apply to clear for a special Indigenous purpose in Indigenous community use areas under the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can apply for clearing for agriculture, grazing, animal husbandry or aquaculture on Indigenous community use areas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can also apply for minor clearing such as for growing local food supplies on Indigenous community use areas. This bill will not impact the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to apply for clearing for agriculture under the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act.

I accept that there have been no applications under the act to date. I understand that some Aboriginal corporations have expressed concerns that the process may be too cumbersome. The government will commence a review of the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act over the coming year to ensure that it provides economic development opportunities for traditional owners. I want to make sure that the hard-fought protections for economic development on the cape are workable and not a barrier to opportunities. I have made it clear that I want the government to be a partner in economic development. I want this review to deliver a simple and effective process whereby the application of these protections is judged in the context of the local needs and demands across the most diverse communities in our state.

There are already protections in the legislation for local landholders. Landholders on the cape can continue to apply for other types of clearing permitted by the vegetation management framework. Landholders in the cape can clear under the accepted development codes and exemptions for a range of activities. These activities include clearing for property and infrastructure, weed control and public safety and exemptions to clear to construct and maintain fences, firebreaks and necessary infrastructure.

I have spoken to locals who have concerns about the impact of this bill. I say to those people that, regardless of our differences of opinion on this legislation, I will continue to listen and I will continue to work with them on the economic development of Cape York. We have had this legislation in the past and we continued to grow local opportunities on the cape. I am confident that the cape has a strong future and that this legislation will be part of that strong future. I commend this bill to the House.