




Speech By
Daniel Purdie

MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2018

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (3.03 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As a boy from Brisbane who now lives at the beach, vegetation management is not an issue that is often at the forefront of my mind. I submit that being a little detached from this issue has put me in a good position to step back and assess the proposed legislation on the facts and the evidence at hand.

As a former detective, my life revolved around making informed decisions only after an examination of all the available evidence. I have listened carefully to all members from both sides of the House during this debate. I respect those members who have a more close-up, personal connection to the land than I do, particularly those whom this legislation will directly impact. I have tried hard to review the volumes of information available, and I congratulate the parliamentary committee for the work they have done in working through all of the material and the submissions.

I appreciate that I was not here in the previous parliament when this legislation was initially introduced, but I am struggling to find any validated evidence to support or justify it. It appears to me that the catalyst for this legislation was based on satellite imagery contained in the Statewide Landcover and Trees Study, or SLATS report. During recent committee hearings it was submitted that the SLATS report is not reliable as it cannot accurately measure regrowth, so the initial information that led to outrage in the inner city and subsequent media coverage of reckless and unlawful widespread clearing of our farming land was most probably unwarranted. It now appears clear that the satellite imagery used to perpetuate these assertions has been shown to be inconclusive at best.

Listening to the debate on both sides, it appears to me that it has become a farmer versus Great Barrier Reef argument. I have heard those opposite talk about protecting our environment and the Great Barrier Reef. They refer to overseas examples of massive large-scale land clearing and the impact it has on our climate. LNP members on this side also care about our environment and appreciate how important the Great Barrier Reef is to us, our nation and the world. The LNP is committed to environmental protection and laws which ensure that land clearing is done in a properly regulated manner to protect our streams, rivers and catchments, and particularly our Great Barrier Reef. It was the LNP when in government that fought for and protected the reef. It was the LNP that introduced best management practice policies for our beef and canefarmers.

It appears to me that those opposite are using the Great Barrier Reef, knowing how important it is to us all, to perpetuate fear around this issue. We heard from the Deputy Premier just before the lunch break, who stated on a number of occasions that this legislation is required to stop unthinking and widespread land clearing. As far as I am aware, information now available to the House obtained during the committee process indicates that, due to inaccurate satellite imagery which cannot accurately identify regrowth, there is no evidence that any unthinking land clearing is occurring.

Another issue I have with this bill is the extraordinarily excessive and intrusive powers granted to departmental vegetation management officers with respect to their power of entry. As I said earlier, as a former detective I can tell members that, while conducting a criminal investigation for offences like drug trafficking, possessing child exploitation material, rape or murder, Queensland police officers have to satisfy the grounds of a search warrant, most often before a judge or magistrate. These grounds are often very detailed and require direct intelligence linking evidence of the indictable offence with the property wishing to be searched.

I have personally appeared before a magistrate with a search warrant application for a drug-trafficking operation involving Middle Eastern crime gangs where the grounds for my search warrant and entry to the premises were in supporting information and intelligence contained in over 50 pages. The fact that the current legislation before the House gives departmental officers the power to enter a property without warrant, without prior justification, is extraordinary to say the least.

I too spoke to farmers and their families outside yesterday. They do not want special exemptions or relaxations; all they want is a fair go for our farmers. I submit that the catalyst for this bill has been shown to be flawed during the committee process, and I appeal to those opposite to rethink their position. For those reasons, I oppose this bill and will support the sensible amendments to be put forward by the member for Burdekin.