




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.20 pm): It is a privilege to hold a seat in this House. It is a privilege that is hard earned, and we have it at the behest of our constituents—constituents across this great state who understand what it is to feed our people and to clothe our people. They are the ones who have spoken out against this bad law.

There is no-one sadder than me that the great Andrew Cripps does not have a seat in this place anymore, because the former member for Hinchinbrook worked his guts out for the people of Queensland, along with the other members of the LNP, to make common-sense vegetation management laws so that our farmers knew what they were working with. They knew what the boundaries were. These people are not criminals. They are people who are just trying to look after their land, to keep it in the place where it should be for the next generation. They are the custodians of our great state, and it annoys me so much that we are back in this chamber defending those common-sense laws.

Today is one of those days in this parliament that exposes the absolute ignorance and the blatant disrespect that those opposite in the Labor Party have for our Queensland landholders and farmers. Labor's proposed vegetation management laws are a brutal and unprovoked attack on the farming families and communities right across Queensland. No other issue so starkly demonstrates the difference between them and us. The party that I lead, the Liberal National Party, will always stand shoulder to shoulder with our regional producers, our farmers and our landholders across this state. The LNP will protect farmers' rights to run sustainable, successful businesses and support their families and the next generation. We will always respect and support the industry that is the economic backbone of this great state. Sadly, but not surprisingly, none of those principles matter to those opposite. If they did, they would not be reintroducing these draconian native vegetation laws that simply make it harder for our regional people to get ahead—and it is not the first time.

For decades the Labor Party have been trying to turn the screws on this proud profession to satisfy their own green obsession and buy those votes in the south-east corner. Make no mistake: behind each and every Labor member in this House is a union master pulling their strings. For decades Labor have put themselves, their green mates and their union masters before the real people of Queensland, and I acknowledge those sitting in the gallery here today.

The LNP is committed to protecting our precious environment. We support laws that properly and fairly regulate the vegetation management practices that farmers must carry out to maintain and boost the productivity of their land. We support laws that protect the streams and rivers of our Great Barrier Reef catchments, but the laws that Labor are proposing are not fair and will hurt farming and grazing families and their communities. They are not fair to the thousands of Queensland farmers who invested in land, livestock and equipment with the clear expectation of being able to manage their properties to make the money they need to pay the bills—the taxes that this Labor government keeps putting on them.

Labor's laws literally pull the rug from underneath these farming families. These laws lock up nearly a million hectares of agricultural land from routine practices of vegetation management that keep land in production. They shut down the ability to open up any new agricultural land, killing off thousands of potential jobs and denying billions of dollars in export income for our state. These laws reduce farmers to criminals on their own land by reactivating and giving more power to Labor's dreaded tree police. These laws tie up rural producers in reams of red tape including costly bureaucratic development application processes that see these landholders charged thousands of dollars just to manage their own thickened vegetation—and all at a time when Queensland desperately needs to grow this important agricultural sector. We have had years of prolonged drought and loss of employment in regional areas. How does Labor defend this? With dodgy figures and no consultation, that is how. The very people these laws hit the hardest were not even given a seat at the table when the laws were written.

The bill was introduced in such a short period of time. On behalf of the LNP, I personally want to thank each and every one of the 13,000 Queenslanders who made submissions to the committee. I want to thank each and every Queenslander who stood out here on Speakers' Corner and rallied for their rights. I want to thank my family members—graziers from Wandoan—who stood out there to defend the rights of my family to continue farming in this great state. I am a proud daughter of an agricultural producer, and I am not going to stand in this chamber and let those opposite call my family, my friends and the farmers of Queensland criminals.

To add insult to injury, for decades we have had to listen to Labor peddling mistruths about vegetation management in Queensland. They were happy to trash reputations but they are now happy to stand over there and claim that chickpeas are going to solve the world's problems. Well, I have news for the Premier: you need land to grow chickpeas. It is funny that. My husband and I have grown chickpeas. We know what it takes to grow chickpeas. If you are going to stand up and take credit for Queensland farmers who are growing and exporting chickpeas to feed thousands of starving people across this world of ours, you need laws that allow landholders to manage their land full stop. But do not let the truth ever get in the way of a good story when it comes to the Labor Party and Annastacia Palaszczuk.

The hypocrisy of this Labor government is simply staggering. Not only that, they have hidden from Queenslanders the long-term impact the laws will have on all households. To make it simple for those opposite: if you make it harder for us to farm our land, it is going to be more expensive in the supermarket full stop. Again, it is simple but unfortunately this is what we are dealing with. There is no common sense on that side of the House.

I was proud to be a member of the LNP government that helped restore balance to the vegetation management laws. In 2013 I stood in this House and I spoke about Mr Alan Crawford, a grazier from Gordonbrook in my electorate. I dealt with Mr Crawford when I was a lawyer in Kingaroy. He continued to talk to me after he fell foul of another Labor government's obsession with farmer bashing in the Vegetation Management Act 1999. After responsibly managing his vegetation since the sixties, the tree police dragged Mr Crawford to court, prosecuted and fined him.

This took a huge toll on his life. He told me at the time, 'This has taken 10 years off my life.' Sadly, Mr Crawford passed away two days ago. I would like to send my heartfelt condolences to his family—to Val, their family and friends—and thank them for standing up to these draconian laws after they were at the front line. My message to the rural producers is clear. The Liberal National Party has and will continue to fight for your families. We will fight Labor's law at every turn. These laws are unfair, they are unjust, they are unworkable and every LNP member in this chamber stands to vote against this bill.

(Time expired)