




Speech By  
**Joan Pease**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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## **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (12.27 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to make comment with regard to the member for Scenic Rim and his demonisation of the Queensland Labor Party. Like my parliamentary colleague the member for Cooper, I want to be on the right side of history. The Palaszczuk government is committed to protecting Australia's greatest natural wonder—the Great Barrier Reef. I thank the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy for introducing the bill into this parliament; the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee for its consideration of the bill; those who lodged written submissions on the bill; and the committee secretariat. I also understand that Hansard was kept very busy at the public hearings, so thank you for that. I also want to acknowledge all of the people who attended the many hearings putting forward their views.

The objectives of this bill are to amend the Planning Act 2016, the Planning Regulation 2017, the Vegetation Management Act 1999 and the Water Act 2000 and to reinstate a responsible vegetation management framework, providing long-term sustainability of the Great Barrier Reef and indeed the agricultural sector. This bill is important as it honours the government's 2017 election commitment to further protect remnant and high-conservation-value non-remnant vegetation, to amend the accepted development vegetation clearing codes to ensure that they are providing appropriate protections based on Queensland Herbarium advice, and to align the definition of 'high-value regrowth vegetation' with the international definition of high conservation value.

I also know how important agriculture is to Queensland and that it has seen significant growth—in fact, since 2006 that growth has almost doubled. The Port of Brisbane, which is in my electorate of Lytton, is the final port of call for much of our agricultural exports.

In 2014 the Queensland government made election commitments to protect the Great Barrier Reef and reduce Queensland's carbon emissions by reinstating nation-leading vegetation protection laws that were repealed by the LNP. This government's commitment was part of a broader drive to end broadscale tree clearing in Queensland and enhance protection for vegetation of significant environmental value, including native vegetation and maturing regrowth, habitat for near-threatened species and riparian vegetation growth across all Great Barrier Reef catchments. These changes are also considered to be critical to the government's agenda to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and better protect the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

Central to the bill is removing the 2013 amendments made by the LNP that, shamefully, allowed broadscale clearing. Within three years in Queensland, clearing rates of remnant native vegetation increased from 59,800 hectares in 2012-13 to 138,000 in 2015-16. This bill will remove high-value agriculture and irrigated high-value agriculture as a relevant purpose for clearing. It is anticipated that the removal of this purpose will also reduce clearing rates and subsequent carbon emissions in Queensland.

Following advice from the Queensland Herbarium, this bill also redefines the high-value regrowth definition to high-value regrowth vegetation that has not been cleared for 15 years and reinstates the protection of high-value regrowth vegetation on freehold and Indigenous land. This regulatory change will be supported by high-value regrowth mapping updates to the regulated vegetation maps. It is further proposed to align high-value regrowth with high conservation values by amending the definition of 'protected wildlife' to include habitat for near-threatened wildlife species. The bill also amends the provisions of the Water Act 2000 to ensure the appropriate management of riverine activities to prevent adverse impacts to the integrity of the watercourses and the environment.

The Great Barrier Reef is an iconic part of Queensland. It is an economic enabler, generating thousands of jobs in the tourism sector, attracting thousands of visitors each and every year and it contributes nearly \$6 billion to the Queensland economy. This magnificent great wonder of the world needs to be protected so that it can continue to be a natural wonder for each successive generation. In echoing the words of the member for Cooper, I, too, want to look my children and my children's children in the eye and say that, when I was a member of parliament, I fought for the Great Barrier Reef.

We will achieve this commitment by strengthening vegetation management laws to protect remnant and high-value regrowth native vegetation. This bill provides consistent protection by extending the regulation of clearing regrowth near watercourses and the regrowth of vegetation to three additional Great Barrier Reef catchments: the eastern Cape York, Fitzroy and Burnett-Mary catchments. Expanding the regulation of riverine regrowth to these catchments will increase the protection for the Great Barrier Reef from sediment run-offs and other impacts of clearing. The changes to the definition of 'high-value regrowth' will also protect an additional 405,000 hectares, or 47 per cent, within the Great Barrier Reef catchments.

This bill recognises the importance of ensuring that Queensland follows a responsible vegetation management framework that values conservation regrowth and ends broadscale tree clearing. It also supports one of Australia's greatest natural wonders and ensures that it can be protected so that generations to come can continue to enjoy its rich beauty and wonder. I commend the bill to the House.