




Speech By  
**Jon Krause**

**MEMBER FOR SCENIC RIM**

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

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (12.18 pm): I rise to oppose this bill and reflect on the contributions of other members on this side who have pointed out that this bill represents nothing more than political payback by the Labor Party to their friends the Greens. That is the only reason this bill is here in this parliament and the only reason that at least the last six changes made by the Labor Party to the Vegetation Management Act have come to this parliament.

I represent an area which will be affected greatly by the restrictions that will be put in place by this bill. There is a lot of concern out there in my community about the impact of this legislation and even more concern about the ongoing agenda of the Greens and the Labor Party in South-East Queensland when it comes to vegetation management. As a result of this legislation and all of its past iterations it is getting harder and harder for farmers to farm and manage their land.

I grew up in Marburg in the electorate of Ipswich West, and I want to talk about slightly different issues to other members. It is part of the Rosewood scrub area and about 130 years ago thousands and thousands of German immigrants were sent to live there and they were given land—the same as they were in the Brisbane Valley, the same as they were in the Darling Downs, the same as they were in the Fassifern area in my electorate.

They were given land and they were told to clear it and to make it productive because back then, in the 1870s and the early 1900s, this parliament recognised that the clearing of land for agriculture created value for that land, created value for the economy and created value for Queensland. They did the work to create the vital agricultural industry that we have today. They did the work and cleared the land to grow crops to put food on the table of people in Brisbane and Ipswich and everywhere else in Queensland. They did the work to create the export industries that still put dollars into Treasury coffers today. They did the work that fed Queensland through very tough times.

Back then our farmers were valued and government valued the work that they did. Once again the Labor Party, for naked political purposes, is demonising and devaluing and denigrating farmers, it is denigrating agricultural industries and it is denigrating rural and regional communities, and for what? Because vegetation management activity takes place on about 0.3 per cent of Queensland's land mass each year. It is a tiny footprint.

**Mr Millar:** Less than a quarter of a per cent.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Less than a quarter of a per cent. In areas like Marburg on the outskirts of Ipswich, where agriculture has stopped due to market changes, the scrub that was taken away years ago is reasserting itself. It is growing back, but that is not even included in the data that the government is relying on to bring in these changes. Regrowth is not included in its calculations. In fact, there is no way of measuring regrowth. The government data is flawed. The science is flawed. In the Fassifern and Beaudesert regions the biggest risk to vegetation is not farming; it is actually residential development. In many places in South-East Queensland that is the biggest risk, but we do not hear any of the noises made by the government with regard to agriculture made with respect to residential development.

These laws destroy value in land, they will destroy agricultural productivity and, in some cases, they will destroy livelihoods. That has been expressed to me many times by farmers in my electorate who are concerned about their ability to do what they need to do to make their land productive, and at best they will have to go through the bureaucratic wringer. They will have to pay fees and charges. They will have to commission consultants' reports and spend thousands and thousands of dollars in order to do what they have been doing for generations—at best.

At worst, they will not be able to undertake what they need to do to keep their land in use and productive land will be lost. This is happening at a time when the government always bangs on about how much it loves agriculture and it wants to support it and it wants to grow it, but then it brings in laws like this that are going to take land out of development. In particular the regrowth restrictions in this bill will mean that land farmed for generations will be locked up. It will be locked up and farmers will need to go through an exhaustive and extensive—a hideous—development approval process just to do what they have been doing for generations.

The Labor Party members in this House should hang their heads in shame at what they are doing to rural and regional Queensland and farming communities through this bill. I know some members know better than this. I know personally some members opposite know that what they are doing is the wrong thing, but will they have the courage to walk across here to vote against these laws? I very much doubt it, because the Labor Party is too beholden to the green movement and to Greens party preferences at each election—state and federal—so therefore there is no way that those opposite can do that.

This is not just an issue for agricultural industries. The Urban Development Institute of Australia has already expressed its concern that the regrowth definition will lock up land from residential development. The Property Council is concerned that local governments may also, on the back of this legislation, change their planning schemes to inhibit urban development. Most of all, the proposal from the government to pass this bill ignores the voices of Queenslanders through the consultation process.

There were 13,000-plus submissions to the inquiry, most against the laws. The inquiry process was not perfect—no, far from it in that the committee should have gone to many other places—but the voices that were heard were by and large against this. Yesterday there were hundreds, perhaps over 1,000, farmers and their families outside here letting it be known that this is, in some cases, a do-or-die proposition for their businesses, yet the government proceeds nonetheless despite vegetation management activities only occurring on less than a quarter of a per cent of Queensland's land mass.

As the member for Caloundra elaborated earlier, the powers given to the vegetation enforcement officers will be greater than the powers given to police. The fact that they can enter landowners' properties, even if they have only a suspicion of a breach, is very concerning. I know that the reverse onus of proof has been taken out of this bill. That is a good move; no doubt about it. It would be better if the bill was not in the House altogether. That reverse onus of proof is taken out, but it is very concerning to have these Gestapo-like powers given to vegetation enforcement officers.

**Mr Millar:** With no warrant.

**Mr KRAUSE:** The tree police will be back without a warrant, as the member for Gregory says, and I think farmers all around the state have much to worry about when it comes to these powers. Who will be the oversight body for those officers? Will they be subject to CCC oversight? Will they be subject to oversight by a parliamentary committee, or will they simply have free rein to do whatever they want under the departmental powers and the powers in this bill?

These laws demonise, denigrate and will be destructive to agricultural industries in my electorate and across the state. The inclusion of regrowth that has not been cleared for 15 years will lock up about 860,000 hectares of productive land. Labor's legislation is all about the Greens preferences, the deals. It is not truly about looking after the land, because our farmers are terrific custodians of our country and they are true environmentalists who actually care for their land because they depend on it for a living. They depend on it for their family's income and their livelihood. This is all about Greens preferences and Greens scare campaigns. The Labor Party should hang its head in shame that it continually submits to the lies and propaganda of the Greens party. It should have the courage and the determination to stand up to it and say, 'Enough is enough,' but it does not. We oppose these laws, which will be destructive to farming families and farming communities. They should be rejected.