




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2018

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

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (3.39 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. Firstly, I put on the record my thanks to all members of the bipartisan committee and my appreciation of their hard work and their travel in the consideration of this bill, and for their report. The fact that they took their hearings to regional centres, allowing interested parties to address them directly, adds weight to the process undertaken.

I note that the committee went to locations such as Rockhampton, Townsville and Cloncurry, where they visited Granada Station and met with the Hacon family. Several weeks prior to that visit, I too had visited the Hacons' homestead. I have a lot of respect for the Hacon family. They are a resilient family, identical to other families in regions throughout Queensland. The committee also travelled to Longreach, Charleville, Cairns and then back to Brisbane where they conducted further hearings.

In the lead-up to the introduction of this bill I spoke to producers and stakeholders in many of those places. Therefore, I was keen for the committee to hear directly from interested producers across the state about the impacts of the bill. In my visits throughout the state, I have had the opportunity to meet many good men and women from the land. I was very pleased that the committee considered the views of the people interested in this debate and enabled them to participate in the process.

As I told regional producers and councils at that time, if you want to have your say, put in a submission and be part of the process. I am pleased that they did. In March, I wrote to the chair of the committee asking that they consider holding hearings in regional Queensland. I am glad that they listened to that advice and that it came to pass. I note the recommendations of the report prepared by the bipartisan committee.

I support the government's legislative agenda by supporting this legislation. The Labor Party could have not been clearer about its intentions regarding this legislation. A key plank of our 2015 election campaign was that, in government, the Labor Party would act on land clearing. Labor took the land-clearing laws to the last parliament. The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 was well ventilated, with numerous public hearings held across Queensland.

I think few bills have had the same level of community engagement, committee investigation and parliamentary debate as this bill and its previous iterations. The report of the previous committee was detailed. Over 600 submissions were received. Our government has again ensured that a full committee process has been undertaken and hearings have been held during the committee's consideration of this bill.

Midway through 2017, the Labor Party launched the policy, but the LNP was missing in action when it came to debate on that policy at the time. It should be noted that those opposite who have criticised this process remain quiet about their past form on this legislation. In fact, in 2004 the members for Caloundra, Surfers Paradise and Currumbin voted with the then Labor government for stronger vegetation management laws to protect the environment. For the benefit of the House, I table a copy of the division on the third reading of that bill, which identifies their support of the 2004 legislation.

*Tabled paper:* Extract from Queensland parliament *Record of Proceedings*, dated 22 April 2004, pp 409-410 [595].

In 2012, before coming to government, the LNP was not up-front with the people of Queensland. Before that election, in a letter to the WWF, then leader of the opposition Campbell Newman stated that the LNP would retain the current level of statutory vegetation protection. I repeat: he stated that the LNP would retain the current level of statutory vegetation protection. I table that correspondence to the WWF.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 14 March 2012, from the then leader of the LNP, Mr Campbell Newman, to the Chief Executive Officer, WWF-Australia, Mr Dermot O'Gorman, regarding the WWF-Australia's key election issues on the Great Barrier Reef [596].

That was just one of the many election commitments that the Newman government broke while the Leader of the Opposition was his assistant treasurer. That further shows that the LNP either was inconsistent in its policies or flat out misled the public about its intentions. That is in stark contrast to the Labor approach, which is to set out clearly at election time our agenda and policies, explaining fully the parliamentary processes and the committee hearings that will be held.

Those opposite may not like the bill, but they cannot say that they did not know it was coming or that they lacked an opportunity to have their say. I know that the committee report disappointed some in the agriculture sector, but Labor will continue to provide certainty for those people into the future. I note that, at the recent committee hearings, committee members reiterated their message to witnesses, stating multiple times that this bill will not erode the certainty of PMAVs.

As I said in this place on 17 March 2016 in relation to the last iteration of this bill, climate change is an ever-pressing concern. I have been consistent on this point for many years. At that time I noted that we are at a point where we need to act on the matter before us. Whether it is in respect to managing vegetation or managing climate change, as a parliament we have a responsibility to act on behalf of Queenslanders. That was true then and it is true now.

As a senator for Queensland, I saw firsthand the reactionary approach of the LNP in the federal sphere, denying the reality of climate change and ignoring the fact that the science has been settled. I was fortunate enough to be on two committees that heard matters in respect to not only the science but also the economics behind climate change: the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Inquiry and the Senate Select Committee on Climate Change. Having heard the evidence around those matters, I did not need any convincing as to why we need to address climate change.

In 2009, Queensland Liberal and National Party senators are on record as voting with the Greens to oppose climate change legislation in the federal Senate. Across this chamber, elements of the LNP still refuse to accept the science on climate change, refuse to believe that Queensland needs to act and refuse to believe that we have a problem. It remains clear that the LNP is now a disappointing exhibit of the anti-science brigade.

It is not a stretch to recognise that there is not broad support for this legislation from industry and I acknowledge that. However, I make it clear to industry and the agricultural sector more broadly that the Palaszczuk government will continue to engage with the sector on the broad range of issues facing agricultural industries in Queensland. Although this is a matter where there is disagreement, it will not detract from my commitment or that of the government to make sure that agriculture is well placed to grow and increase in value and productivity.

In conjunction with Minister Anthony Lynham, I have engaged with industry on this matter and I will continue to do so. So far in my time in this portfolio, I have travelled to over 18 rural and regional towns, covering more than 12,000 kilometres. I have the backing of the Premier in doing that. I have met face to face with farmers, growers, industry bodies, fisher men and women and local councillors. This government will continue to consult on our approach and will not shy away from difficult discussions, even when there are disagreements over policy.

I note that one of the concerns raised by industry is ongoing thickening not being captured by SLATS. I am pleased that Minister Lynham has committed to future consideration of measuring regrowth in SLATS.

In conclusion, the report prepared by the committee is fulsome, rigorous and in-depth, and demonstrates that the bill before the House should be supported. Under this legislation agriculture will continue to prosper in Queensland and Queensland produce will continue to be the desire of customers around the world. Again, I thank the committee for their consideration of and deliberations on this bill.