




Speech By  
**Meaghan Scanlon**

**MEMBER FOR GAVEN**

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

 **Ms SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (4.53 pm): I appreciate the opportunity to speak in favour of this bill. I would like to highlight the hypocrisy of that side: in one minute we had members on that side of the House saying that we have rushed through this legislation and then in the next minute we had the member for Everton outlining that we have been debating this bill for years. It is very clear that the Palaszczuk government introduced this government legislation in the previous parliament. We were very clear during the election campaign that we were going to introduce this legislation. We have introduced it and we are debating it today again because we know that it is the right thing to do.

I rise to speak in favour of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The objects of this bill are to amend the Vegetation Management Act, Planning Act, Planning Regulation and Water Act to reinstate responsible land-clearing laws in Queensland. The purpose of this bill gives effect to providing consistent protection to regrowth vegetation near watercourses in all Great Barrier Reef catchments and reintroducing key provisions in the Water Act requiring landholders to obtain riverine protection permits for clearing vegetation in a watercourse. These amendments build upon our record and commitment in protecting Queensland's biodiversity and our state's greatest natural asset, the Great Barrier Reef, and delivers what we promised: introducing legislation to protect remnant and high conservation value regrowth vegetation.

The Newman government's changes to the Vegetation Management Act enabled tree clearing on a reckless scale. The Statewide Land Cover and Trees Study report for 2015-16 identified that the total statewide woody vegetation clearing rate was approximately 395,000 hectares per year. This is 97,000 hectares per year higher than the 2014-15 vegetation clearing rate. These excessive clearing laws have quadrupled since the member for Nanango and the LNP tore up Labor's sensible laws. Clearing in Queensland is now at a rate of a thousand football fields every day thanks to the LNP.

The Newman government's amendments were branded the biggest roll back of environmental protection in Australia's history by the World Wildlife Fund Australia and recognised as a concern to the health of the Great Barrier Reef by UNESCO. We know that these weak laws are threatening Queensland's biodiversity, damaging the Great Barrier Reef and impeding upon our efforts in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Labor has vowed to repeal the Newman government's reckless position on tree clearing. The Palaszczuk government has made every effort to consult on these laws with industry and environmental stakeholders whilst maintaining a firm position that the science is extremely clear. This reckless land clearing is a threat to our state's biodiversity and great asset, the reef.

Despite the fearmongering and rhetoric being peddled by the LNP, the simple fact is that the agriculture industry thrived under the decade of Labor's tree-clearing laws, growing by more than \$2 billion in sector profitability during that period, which shows that we can get the balance right between agriculture and our environment. I am proud to support the Palaszczuk government's legislation that aligns with our position in relation to vegetation management clearly outlined in our commitments during the 2015 state election campaign. As a natural wonder of the world and UNESCO World Heritage site, the Great Barrier Reef is our state's greatest natural tourism advantage and a major economic driver

for our coastal communities. Supporting almost 60,000 direct and indirect jobs, the Great Barrier Reef is a major contributor to our tourism industry and state economy, contributing more than \$5.5 billion to our national GDP.

As a member of generation Y, I believe in my peers being able to experience the richness of the Great Barrier Reef as well as future generations. My generation is concerned about climate change. We need to act before it is too late. We know that one of the biggest threats towards the Great Barrier Reef is climate change. I urge that side of the chamber to think about the future generations and the effects that widescale land-clearing laws have on our environment and the sort of Queensland that we want to leave behind for future generations.

As Assistant Minister for Tourism Industry Development, I know the importance of creating jobs for young Queenslanders and backing an industry which will support our future. As an emerging pillar of our state economy, tourism is worth \$25 billion to Queensland. That supports one in every 10 jobs. That is why I stand with the Palaszczuk government backing policies that protect our natural assets that are driving opportunities and jobs in the tourism sector. We know that the Great Barrier Reef is a living, breathing example of people wanting to experience natural environments and wonders that are crucial to cherish for future generations.

That is why the Palaszczuk government's ecotourism plan aims to strike the right balance in protecting our environment and ensuring tourists from interstate and abroad can appreciate the beauty that Queensland has to offer. Alongside our commitment to protecting our natural environment and the Great Barrier Reef for future generations, it is our priority to ensure that Queenslanders can capitalise on opportunities evident in the clean and renewable energy sector. Like the tourism sector, clean energy is affording Queenslanders with a wealth of job opportunities.

It beggars belief that the federal LNP wanted to make an announcement about saving the reef on the weekend—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stewart): Member, you have actually used unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

**Ms SCANLON:** I withdraw. Now they are trying to prevent laws that stop run-off into the reef. I am proud to be a part of a government that is committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, making Queensland the leading clean energy state by achieving a renewable energy target by 50 per cent by 2030 and embracing clean energy jobs.

I call on the LNP to support this legislation, protect our biodiversity and back Queensland's economic future to support the jobs of tomorrow in exciting new industries. The science is very clear and we must act now. If we fail, we are failing Queensland's future generations. I am proud to support the Palaszczuk government's legislation, which was arrived at after consultation with Queensland environmental and industry groups. This legislation clearly aligns with our 2015 state election commitments, protects the environment and invests in opportunities for future generations of Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.