




Speech By  
**Michael Hart**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2018

**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (5.28 pm): I also rise to oppose the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Here we go again with the Labor Party rolling out its ideological—

**Mr Costigan:** Warlords.

**Mr HART:** I take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday—warlords. The members opposite have an ideological feeling about what they should do because they made a promise at an election to garner Greens preferences. That is what this bill is all about—Greens preferences. Those members opposite do not care one iota about our farmers. It might be news to those opposite that milk, meat and cheese do not come from Coles; they come from a farm.

It is grown by our farmers. If we do not treat these people with the respect that they deserve that could cease and we will all have a massive problem. I do not know about those opposite, but I cannot live without my cheese, butter or milk. I might be from a city electorate, but my family had a dairy farm in southern New South Wales. They loved their land. They took care of their land. They knew exactly what they were doing. They knew exactly what they could do to their land to make it the most productive it could be. They are the sorts of farmers that we need; they are the sorts of farmers that we have.

Today a thousand-odd farmers from all over Queensland came to Parliament House. I spoke to a gentleman who had driven 10 hours overnight to get here. He was that passionate about having his voice heard by those members opposite in this argument. It was most disrespectful that those opposite did not bother to go out and talk to those farmers, especially the Premier who did not bother to go out and talk to those farmers. She was specifically invited. We raised it during question time. We asked her to please go out and talk to those farmers. That did not happen.

The committee process in this place is a good process. When it works it works well. In this case the committee process was an absolutely farce. We had six members of this parliament on that committee. From the other side we had the member for Bancroft. I hardly think there is too much farming in the member for Bancroft's electorate. Maybe he knows a little bit about farming. I would like to think that the member for Bancroft went to these hearings with an open mind, but I suspect it was completely closed. We also had on the committee the member for Ipswich West. I know there are farms in Ipswich West. I know the member for Ipswich West has an open mind most of the time. I am rather surprised that he is going to vote with the Labor Party. I am very disappointed in the member for Ipswich West. Then we have the member for Mount Ommaney. There are no farms there and she does not care.

There were about 14,000 submissions to the committee. That has to be one of the biggest bundle of submissions that has ever been put into a committee. That has to be kept in perspective. There were 773 actual submissions and there were over 13,100 form submissions. People were keen enough to put something in. Unfortunately what happens with these form submissions is you are a member of a group somewhere, they send you an email and they say please forward this email, it might have some effect. All these submissions came from the Environmental Defenders Office, the World Wildlife Fund, the Queensland Conservation Council, the Wilderness Society and Greenpeace. That is pretty much

the 13,000. There were a couple from a few farmers. There were eight from some landholders in North Queensland and seven from Middelmount. Most of the submissions came from the green groups that I mentioned.

I congratulate the committee for going to Rockhampton, Townsville, Cloncurry, Longreach, Charleville and Cairns and listening to the people there. I had a look through the report because I thought I might pull out a couple of things that some of the people had to say at the committee hearings. I came across one that I thought was well worth reading into the record in its entirety because I think it says everything more eloquently than I was going to say it. This is from a Mr MacDonnell. He was obviously under a bit of time pressure at the meeting in Cairns—

Mr Chairman, I appreciate that we are over time, but I am going to completely reject your suggestion that we have only 10 minutes. I have driven 1,400 kilometres, I have spent six hours on a plane and I am going to spend two nights sleeping in a swag beside my car before I get home. I have not come this far—because it is so important to my family—to be rushed in a few minutes.

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Together with my wife Pauline and my three children we run Brigalow Beef Company. Our operation spreads across two properties in Central Queensland: 31,500 hectares of land is under management, 65 per cent of which is considered remnant.

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Under the proposed legislation we will only be able to manage timber thickening on 400 hectares, even though I have 11,500 hectares of freehold land that suffers from timber thickening. That is a 96.5 per cent reduction in the area that I can manage for production.

That is pretty telling, is it not? Are those opposite listening? I hope they are. He continues—

The Labor Party has a parliamentary majority. There is no upper house. Without consultation, an essentially urban focused government could pass legislation without understanding the true consequences. That is essentially why I went to such an effort to be here today, because I want to look you, Jim and Jess, firmly in the eye. After this legislation goes through some of your colleagues will be able to hide behind ignorance, they will say they did not know the full implications on regional Australia—and how could they, they are from urban electorates—but yourselves, you have travelled to all the regions, you have heard the heartfelt evidence given by people. You will have seen people sit in front of you and cry, you will have seen such emotions.

If this process is a sham, like many of us are meant to believe, and that when you leave here you go back, issue a divided report down party lines and the Labor Party goes ahead and moves the legislation, the only hope for the people who have presented before you and the people sitting in this room today and sitting beside me, our only hope is in Chris, Jim and Jess. Our hope is that you show some intestinal fortitude and that you stand up to the powers that be in your party and your Deputy Premier and let her know, given what you have heard, you could not in all conscience vote for this legislation.

What came out of that? Not too much, I have to say. Those members of the Labor Party with the casting vote by their chair moved only those eight recommendations. As we have heard from many members here tonight, those eight recommendations basically just fix the changes to the legislation that this bill puts in place.

I support our shadow minister and the very sensible amendments he will make later. If those opposite really care about our farmers and where their next carton of milk will come from they will support our shadow minister. I will not be holding my breath, because I do not think that will help at all. I implore those opposite to take this opportunity to do the sensible thing and support these amendments or do not support the bill at all. I will not be supporting it.