



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2018

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (6.44 pm): I rise to speak to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. I have read and heard a lot about preservation and protection from those opposite, but the only thing that this legislation helps preserve is Labor preferences from the Greens in South-East Queensland. This legislation helps no-one outside of Brisbane. It is the result of pandering to those in the Greens and Labor whose idea of going out to the bush is having a picnic at New Farm Park.

This legislation is nothing but bad news for Queenslanders. This legislation will see the loss of more jobs in rural and regional Queensland. It will see the loss of more prime agricultural land and demonstrates a complete lack of planning and foresight on the part of the government.

I refer to the dissenting report, particularly the evidence that there has been no consideration given to how this legislation will impact on production or on local communities. Even testimony by officers of the department evidenced that lack of consideration. When questioned if the department had undertaken any modelling or if they had intended to undertake any, their answers were simply, 'No.' That is the problem: there has not been enough consideration given to the financial impact of these proposed changes on the Queensland economy, on the livelihoods of farmers and, for that matter, the flow-on effect that these changes will have on the cost of living for Queenslanders.

Mr Grant Maudsley, the president of AgForce Queensland, stated—

We need to get a better understanding of why we do what we do and stop talking about ecological values alone. We can have win-win if we think about this properly. Rather than being 100 percent focussed on ecology the whole time, we have to do both. We have to grow food for this state and we have to look after the environment.

This evening we heard from the member for Maiwar, who said that there have been enough changes—39 changes over the past 20 years—to the legislation. Earlier today we heard from the member for Caloundra, who spoke about the plea from farmers for certainty. This state is looking for investment. We are wanting to send a message to the rest of Australia that Queensland is a great place to live and invest. Unfortunately, we undermine any certainty that investors could have in Queensland because, from one government to the next, from one dodgy piece of legislation to the next, for some 20 or 30 years now we have seen Labor continuing to attack business and farmers in this state.

We have before us another raft of changes that are simply not affordable. I love it when constituents come to me and say, 'Do you know what the government needs to do? We need some more rules,' or, 'We need to spend some more money on something in the community,' or, 'We need to fund another program.' I always say to them, 'What you are actually saying is, "Please tax me more. Please give me another tax. Please put up the cost of living for me and my family."'

Every time we ask for more rules, every time we impose more costs on business and on farmers—and dare I just say ‘farmers’ because if my mother-in-law were here she would say to me, ‘We’re graziers, not farmers’—and graziers, we are putting up the prices of food in our supermarkets, we are creating more job losses across the state, we are making our businesses and our farms and our cattle properties less and less sustainable and we are restricting our opportunities for exports to drive the economy.

At the end of the day, who pays? We do. That is the problem with Laboronomics. The members opposite do not understand how the economy works. They think that we can keep putting up the costs, we can keep introducing more red tape, we can strip away more and more entitlements, we can undermine people’s investments and somehow everything is going to be hunky-dory. It will not.

Like many of my colleagues, I spoke to some of those who were gathered here yesterday at the rally out the front of Parliament House. Some of those families are absolutely heartbroken. They are already doing it tough and all this legislation does is simply put another layer of burden and impost on them. It is simply not fair.

The LNP is the party that stands up for the people in rural and regional Queensland. We care about business and understand how tough it is to make a dollar in a state where the government keeps introducing more and more costs and imposing more and more green ideology on the way business should be conducted. The world is crushing in on us. Those on the other side of the House would do well to consider the future of the Queensland economy. The hypocrisy on the other side of the House is breathtaking: it is not okay to clear land or to maintain land for agricultural purposes—growing food that feeds people and generates prosperity is bad, but it is perfectly okay to allocate and clear prime agricultural land and add to the issue of endangered species by building more solar farms.

Somehow importing more solar panels from Germany and China and hiding all the dirty practices that go with making those solar panels, because we do not want to talk about that, and killing off the mining and agricultural industries in Queensland is better for the economy. The only jobs that we see Labor producing are more jobs in sweatshops in China and Germany and other factories by encouraging policy to build great big solar farms, strip away jobs in the mining industry, disparage hardworking businesses and farmers and take away their land. Those opposite do not like to hear the truth. They do not think about these issues and that is the problem.

Frankly, the proposed changes in this legislation are an absolute disgrace. We have heard from the farmers that they are working hard to comply with the requirements of the past legislation that former member Andrew Cripps brought to this House and fought so hard for. I spoke with farmers yesterday and I have spoken with members of my family who are on the land. I have been to Charleville and up to Mount Ravenswood. For some 10 or 15 years I have spent holidays with my sons working with cattle and fencing some of the waterways around my in-laws’ properties. I can assure the House that the farmers and graziers of Queensland are working hard to protect the environment.

There is a next generation of farmers and graziers out there and we should be proud of them because they understand that sustainability is the key to the future. They understand that the key to the future security of their kids is to put in place good farming and clearing practices. Some of the draconian commentary that we have heard from the other side of the House suggesting that farmers drive around with D9s and clear vegetation may have been true back in the forties and fifties, the post war era in Australia when there was a flurry of uneducated activity to get the nation going, but that is not the case today. Frankly, it is an absolute insult to suggest that the farmers and graziers of Queensland are not responsible with their practices.

I am conscious of the fact that I am running out of time, but I do want to share a story with the House. The member for Callide and I have a common interest in Target Downs. The member for Callide is now the owner of Target Downs. Some 30-odd years ago I spent two weeks of my honeymoon at Target Downs feeding cattle off the back of a truck and refuelling molasses licks. That area was so badly drought stricken that we chose to take time to go out and support our family who were doing it really tough. We know what it is like to do it tough on the land. I know firsthand how hard farmers and graziers are working for Queensland. Frankly, those on the other side of the House should hang their heads in shame that they would even dare to get up and speak in favour of such draconian legislation.