



Speech By  
**Tim Mander**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.42 pm): It goes without saying that I will be speaking against the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I am a Brisbane boy. I was born and raised in Brisbane. I represent an electorate on the edge of Brisbane, just 25 minutes drive from here. I am the first to admit that I do not know the first thing about land management. In fact, I struggle to look after my own lawn, which is on a 600-square-metre block of land. I do understand that this issue is something that my country cousins are very passionate about. I also now understand that it affects not only people in rural and bush areas but also me and my constituents in the south-east corner.

This issue has been debated over the past four or five years. I must admit that initially I was not that engaged with it because I did not fully understand it. I was intrigued by the passion of my colleagues from the country—people like shadow minister Last and the members for Gregory, Warrego, Condamine and Nanango. The new member for Callide has already shown his passion in this area as well. That passion prompted me to find out more about why this issue was so important to them. Over the past two or three years I have gone about trying to educate myself about this issue from a city perspective—as somebody who represents an electorate in the leafy suburbs of Brisbane.

I went to one of the parliamentary inquiry hearings held around the state. In Cairns I attended a rally by people who do not normally protest. Farmers, landowners and graziers are not what you would call regular protestors.

**Mr Janetzki:** They are too busy working.

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection. They are angry. They feel threatened. They feel that they are under personal attack and they cannot understand it. Everybody knows people from the country. You have to spend only five minutes with them to realise that they are the salt of the earth, that they are genuine and that they are passionate about the land and about what they do. This issue has riled them more than anything I have seen before.

As I have tried to educate myself more about this—as I went to the parliamentary inquiry and listened to submission after submission, as I went down today to the rally and talked to people, some of whom have travelled literally thousands of miles, taken time away from their properties and taken their kids out of school because this issue is so important to them—I have started to learn a hell of a lot more about the realities and facts of this issue. Earlier the member for Cairns talked about facts and said that he does not want to character assassinate. He will not last long in the Labor Party if he is not an expert in that area!

Let us look at some of the myths. At the moment, broadscale land clearing is not allowed.

**Mr Janetzki** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection. I have seen on the ABC that photo of two bulldozers with a big chain between them, mowing down trees. You cannot do that now. It is already heavily regulated.

You must seek approvals to clear your land. That is quite a rigorous process. It is a good and proper process. We should have processes like this to make sure that our land is cleared appropriately, but this legislation goes a heck of a lot further than that. Let us debunk that myth right at the start.

I also speak now to members of my electorate so that they understand and have some comfort about my position on this bill. Just 13 per cent of Queensland's land mass is currently developed. That includes urban development. Some 87 per cent of our state is undeveloped. I think that is a pretty good ratio. If we go a step further, in 2015-16 vegetation was managed on just 0.23 per cent of Queensland's area—that is less than a quarter of a per cent—with most being regrowth. The myth that is being promoted by the Labor Party about the environmental damage that is being done to our state by farmers, graziers and other primary producers is exactly that: a myth. It needs to be put to bed right here and now.

Honourable members should imagine this if they live in the suburbs of Brisbane. Imagine that someone comes to their property and tells them what they can and cannot do on that property without one ounce of compensation. That is simply not fair in anybody's language.

The other issue that is becoming very evident as well—and I think it has been mentioned already by a couple of speakers—is the mental health impact this is having on our people on the land: the uncertainty of making an investment on a property and then suddenly realising out of the blue when the government changes legislation that they can now no longer get some sort of return on that investment they have made. That is wrong as well. Anybody with a sense of decency or fairness would know that that is not right.

I have talked to some people—and I do not want to mention their names because I would be worried about whether or not they get future funding outside of here—who deal with mental health issues in the outback. They are based in South-East Queensland, but they go there all the time. They said, 'We are here because the people we represent who we deal with who cannot be here today because they have to work their properties begged us to come and to tell you'—me and the other people who took the time to go out there and talk to them at the rally—'the impact this is having on them mentally'. Heaven help me—I do not even want to mention the number of people out in the bush who will be impacted by this. They are already doing it hard; they already have record suicide rates—far higher than those in the city. Again, that is something that really concerns me.

The other thing that I do not think has been mentioned too much is that when I attended the Cairns hearing of the parliamentary inquiry Gerhardt Pearson from the Cape York Institute was there. He made a point which I think was very valid. He said that this legislation is toxic; it is poison for his people. He exposed the hypocrisy of the Labor Party, who crow about giving the Aboriginal people their land back, and he said, 'Now you won't let us use it. Now you won't let us get a return on the land that we fought so hard for.' It was a very, very telling testimony and one that had great impact on many people, and it had great impact on me.

The last thing I want to say on this is that this government has gone through a charade with regards to consultation—a total charade. When we saw the former environment minister and now health minister a couple of months ago, before the consultation, before the bill was introduced, saying, 'We have got the numbers; we'll get it through now,' we know that already there was a predetermined outcome, despite the Premier saying, 'We are going to go out and consult and listen.' They have not listened. How could they sit on that parliamentary committee and not be moved by not only the emotion but the facts put before them? This is a charade.

I am a boy from the city. I will say that I trust farmers: those who have lived on the land for generations, those who derive their income from the land and who are dependent on it for their future. I trust their ability to look after the environment.

*(Time expired)*