




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREAT BARRIER REEF PROTECTION MEASURES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (4.26 pm): Do I stand by the comments I made in this House in June 2012 and by the LNP's record on the environment and the Great Barrier Reef? Too right I do. I love the Great Barrier Reef. I have had the privilege on numerous occasions to visit this exceptional natural wonder, whether it be at Heron Island or in the Whitsundays, off Cairns or off Port Douglas. I have been there. I have witnessed it firsthand. I love it and I am committed to protecting it. It is simply spectacular.

I also love the tourism that the reef attracts. As the shadow minister for the environment and shadow minister for tourism highlighted, Queensland would not be the same without the tourism the reef brings and the jobs it supports. I love that Queensland and indeed Australia have become world leaders in studying reefs, in understanding what makes them tick and in applying the research we have conducted over decades of studying the Great Barrier Reef. No other nation can boast a natural wonder of the standard and magnitude of the Great Barrier Reef. Similarly, no other nation can claim to contribute so much to international understanding of how best to protect reef systems around the world.

I am sick and tired of a couple of things. I am sick and tired of speaking after the member for Stretton in this House and being verbally by him. I am fed up with those who constantly talk down the Great Barrier Reef, particularly those who use false and misleading information to run scare campaigns not only here in Queensland and across Australia, particularly in our southern cities, but also across the world—people who have suddenly gone quiet when a Labor government is in power. Why? Perhaps it is because those individuals are now working in the Department of Environment and Science.

Let me give a couple of examples of the kind of scare campaign of talking down the reef. One evening when serving as this state's minister for environment I arrived home to be dragged to the computer by my wife, saying, 'Did you do this?' On the screen was a photo of a channel through the Great Barrier Reef with the words 'Minister Powell and Minister Hunt have dredged this channel through the Great Barrier Reef'.

That channel was Hardy's Channel and, as I reminded my wife, God did that, not me. There is no-one in their right mind who would dredge a channel through the reef. That is the level that those campaigns would go to. Similarly, as I left my office at 400 George Street one day, I was confronted by a Greenpeace activist wanting me to sign a petition to save the Great Barrier Reef. She said, 'You look like you might have a few questions.' I said, 'Well, actually, I might have a few answers. I'm the minister for environment.' She said, 'Can you tell me why you're developing ports and dredging 20 ports up and down the length and breadth of Queensland?' I said, 'I'm sorry, but we're focusing on five, four of them in the Great Barrier Reef catchment, and that's consistent with UNESCO.' 'That's my second question,' this lady said. 'Why are you taking your directions from an Indian mining company?' The poor young lady could not distinguish between the United Nations environmental body and an Indian mining company known as Adani. That is the level that these activists have gone to.

I am also fed up by those opposite and their political activists besmirching the LNP's record on the reef, making false and ridiculous statements that somehow we on this side do not love it or value the reef. Let me tell them: it was the LNP that threw out Labor's crazy plan for port developments up and down the coast of Queensland. It was the LNP that dismissed Labor's crazy plan to dredge so much at Abbot Point that it would have created a whole new island from the dredge spoil. It was the LNP that worked with UNESCO to consolidate growth in only five ports, as I said, and one of those was Brisbane—nowhere near the Great Barrier Reef.

It was the LNP that worked with the federal government on a strategic assessment on banning offshore capital dredge spoil disposal on the Reef 2050 vision. It was the LNP that instigated the best management practice programs with our cattle graziers and canegrowers and looked to expand that program to our horticultural industries. It was the LNP that took the successful Healthy Waterways program from here in the south-east and replicated it in the Gladstone harbour and in the waters of Mackay-Whitsunday. It was the LNP that went to the corporate market to find a partner for vital beach restoration work on Raine Island. It was the LNP that invested in a hugely successful crown-of-thorns starfish eradication program. Member for Stretton, do I stand by my record and that of the LNP? You bet I do! That was all done by the LNP.

I am also fed up with the Labor-Greens alliance using the reef to terrorise, demonise and drive to the wall this state's hardworking farmers but, sadly, it is the Labor-Greens way. They do not trust farmers, even though farmers intrinsically know how good land management is directly linked with profitability. If they do not manage their farm and if they do not manage the inputs, they do not get a profit and it does not last for generation after generation. Not only does the Labor-Greens alliance not trust farmers; it does not trust industry groups despite the success those industry groups had in rolling out BMPs across Queensland. No. Instead, those opposite put their decisions in the hands of faceless public servants quarantined from Labor scrutiny. I loved what Matt Leighton from Bundaberg Canegrowers said in that regard. He said—

It's hard to think that someone who may never have stepped onto a canefarm or a farm or doesn't have an agronomic background is telling people who live and breathe and work on their farms what they need to do on their farms.

That is appalling, but that is this Labor government's way.

I am fed up with the creep—the expansion of those anti-farmer, anti-regions laws by stealth, so much so that those laws now apply to my backyard in the electorate of Glass House. Farmers in Maleny, Witta, Montville, Flaxton, Mapleton, Bellthorpe, Reesville, Curramore, Kidaman Creek, Obi Obi, Conondale and Cambroon are now impacted by these disastrous laws. What is the alternative, as I heard the minister and others ask earlier? It is working with the farmers, with the industries. That is what we did through the BMP program. That is what groups like Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group do—a group that, over the course of nearly 30 years, has improved on-farm productivity for landowners while delivering significant environmental benefits.

How did it do it? It worked with those farmers to fence and revegetate riparian zones in the Upper Mary catchment. It has installed alternate livestock watering points and stream crossings. It has dealt with erosion and land instability through repair work. It has removed invasive weeds and it has upgraded effluent systems, feed pads and drainage—all achieved not by a big stick but by partnership with the farmers by building relationships and using those relationships to leverage co-investment to change practice. Do members know what? It has been recognised for it. It has won National Landcare Awards for its work.

Sadly, whether it be because of a Greens preference deal or simply a propensity to revert to legislation and regulatory approaches, this government seems incapable of working with our primary producers. I heard the minister talk about consultation. Sorry, Minister, but consultation is not just meeting or visiting farmers and being empathetic. It is about listening, adapting and changing. Platitudes, handouts, delays and promises just do not cut it.

Seriously, farmers should take comfort in the minister's promise that there will not be further regulatory change? I am sorry, but they have heard it before from Labor premier and Labor minister after Labor premier and Labor minister who have declared that this is a line in the sand. That line keeps shifting. They do not trust you. They do not believe you. If those opposite want to truly demonstrate that they love the reef and they are willing to work with farmers and that they have listened, they need to withdraw this legislation or, if not, vote it down.