




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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## **NATURE CONSERVATION (SPECIAL WILDLIFE RESERVES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.48 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Nature Conservation (Special Wildlife Reserves) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and wish to outline a number of concerns that I have in relation to this legislation and concerns that my constituents share as well. The LNP opposition will be opposing this legislation, and we have many reasons for doing so.

This bill is a direct affront to Queensland's agricultural industries, particularly in my electorate. I have concerns about this legislation and I doubt that it will deliver environmental outcomes. It really is just another land grab without compensation. Will the special wildlife reserves be well managed and what may happen in the future to those lands that are affected by this legislation? I have always had a longstanding principle: if the community requires private land for an environmental or conservation purpose, the community should pay, not the landholder. In this bill we see the opposite. The landholder will have a loss of property rights, and that loss will be in perpetuity.

I wish to highlight the opinion of the Queensland Law Society on this legislation. It has stated that this bill is not good law. The Law Society said—

The amended drafting actually expands the matters to be considered when preparing a proposal to declare, effectively allowing the determination to be made based upon either or both of:

- the 'economical, environmental or community interests' ... under the definition of 'State interest';
- ... the proposed section which appears may be applied so as to encompass the land areas that do not fit easily into the definition of 'State interest'.

The loose parameters regarding the state interest seek to give the minister unfettered control to make declarations. At the very least, meeting the criteria should require both economical, environmental, or community interest and state interest to be satisfied.

As we heard from the opposition spokesman, this legislation gives far too much power to the minister. A future minister with the wrong intentions or, for that matter, influenced by those who have devious or dubious intentions could result in very perverse declarations. As legislators, we should be concerned about what a future government may do and the impacts that may have on landholders.

That brings me to the definition of those who are materially affected. The definition of those considered materially affected by the creation of a special wildlife reserve is negligent. The term 'materially affected' is ambiguous and there is little guidance in the bill, the explanatory notes, or the minister's second reading speech. It remains unclear whether parties such as neighbouring landholders or, for that matter, local governments will be considered in this definition even though the declaration of a special wildlife reserve would have an impact on their property. No doubt, the Labor government has purposely left this 'materially affected' definition to be as ambiguous as possible to make it difficult for any dispute in the courts. This is a massive concern that has also been raised by stakeholders, including AgForce and the Queensland Resources Council.

There is a question about how the notification will be provided about the declarations of a special wildlife reserve. Notification will be provided by newspaper advertisement to the materially affected persons. I have another question for the minister. Are local governments going to be considered materially affected persons and, if not, why not? We will find that there will be one notification in a Brisbane newspaper. If people happen to live at Thargomindah, they probably do not buy the Brisbane newspaper on a daily basis, because it takes a day or two for it to get to Thargomindah.

We already have the problem with the blue dots, or the regional ecosystem trigger maps, where these restrictions can be imposed on landowners' homes—in fact, I am aware of one over the Warrego Highway and many in cultivation paddocks. Landholders receive no notification of these trigger maps, yet they have to go through an ongoing, costly approval process to develop any area that is trigger mapped. Here we go again: an inappropriate notification system from a Labor government. It can find a landholder when it wants to send them a tax invoice for rental or land tax, but it cannot find them for the blue dots of death or for the special wildlife reserve declaration.

When it comes to the management of special wildlife reserves, we need to look no further than the impact carbon farming is having on my electorate. Carbon farmers are often absentee landowners. As more land moves into carbon farming, the more communities depopulate. The same will happen with special wildlife reserves. With carbon farming, there is no incentive to control wild dogs or other pests such as wild pigs, foxes or cats, or to fix the boundary fences. The same will happen with special wildlife reserves. I have not even considered what will happen when existing carbon farms will be overlaid with special wildlife reserves. What a mess that will be in the future thanks to the Palaszczuk Labor government.

People in my electorate do not need more land removed from agricultural production and they do not want more people drifting away from their communities. People in my electorate do not need to lock up areas of land, because they are good land managers who manage that land responsibly and sustainably. I echo the concerns of AgForce both at this inquiry and also that undertaken in 2017. When it comes to helping our drought affected communities, or those who are flood affected, the Palaszczuk Labor government can spin all it wants but the devastating reality is that Labor continues to press this hardline green policy agenda that pushes farmers financially and emotionally to the brink. This bill is not about our vital horticultural, beef, sheep, goat, grazing or other agricultural industry. As the committee heard, even beekeeping would be considered incompatible with a special wildlife management principle.

Under this bill, the conservation agreements for the proposed special wildlife reserves are perpetual—that is, future owners will be tied to this agreement. The LNP and I have serious concerns about the property rights of future landholders and their ability to review, reinvigorate, or renegotiate a special wildlife reserve. There are very limited circumstances in which a special wildlife reserve can be revoked, requiring a resolution of parliament. That is an absolutely extraordinary requirement. That will have an effect on the value of the property, which will adversely impact the owner of the property, as well as potentially impact the value of neighbouring properties.

Future property owners may not wish to fully revoke the full special wildlife reserve, but the bill does not outline the process for review or renegotiation of the reserve even upon a change of ownership of the land. There is no guarantee that a future owner would be able to fulfil the obligations required under the management agreement financially or otherwise. Again, that places risks to the interests of the adjacent landholders and also the stated aims of the special wildlife reserve. If the reserves are to be perpetually binding on the title as a result of this state's laws, surely the state must have some responsibility to ensure that future landholders of the land can fulfil their obligations under the requirements of the reserve. This is a clear case of not much care and no responsibility at all from the Labor government.

This bill will create some headaches for local government. Should there be a lack of management of these special wildlife reserves, there will be a greater impact on the services and budgets of local government. There is no proposal that I can find—or perhaps the minister can enlighten me—to notify local governments in relation to the titles affected by reserves. How will local governments adjust their rating policies if they are not formally notified of these reserves? When an area is declared a reserve, there will be a clear land use change.

Local governments play an important role in supporting our rural fire brigades and in the control of feral pests and weeds. If there is a lack of management on these reserves, no doubt the local government will be impacted and, no doubt, that local government will be requested to increase its compliance in relation to the feral pests and weeds and the fire risk. There will be an impact on a local government's budget despite not getting any advice about a declaration of a reserve. I would very like to hear in the minister's summing-up how she intends to inform local governments about these special wildlife reserves.