




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

---

Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2019

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

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (6.53 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. As indicated earlier in the debate by the shadow minister for environment, the LNP opposition will not be supporting this legislation. Here we are debating this bill that the Palaszczuk Labor government did not have the ticker to debate at the last sitting in Townsville. According to the explanatory notes, the primary objective of the bill is to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to strengthen the Great Barrier Reef protection measures to improve the water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef.

If the Labor government was genuine in their objective to improve the water quality on the reef, we would not have seen such a rushed committee process and the shutdown of debate and input from stakeholders. We would not have seen the collection of data from producers and agribusinesses without any idea of how this is to be used. We would not have seen the handing of powers to bureaucrats in Brisbane to decide how, when and where businesses will operate throughout this state without any requirement for the decisions to be based on science or industry input. What we are seeing in this legislation is more cheap political expediency rather than care for the Great Barrier Reef.

This government has a shocking record when it comes to supporting agriculture in this state, and this legislation is another example. We have the draconian vegetation management laws making it hard for farmers to feed their stock during the drought. We have the trigger mapping debacle that mapped towns and major infrastructure and even Hills hoists in some backyards. We have electricity costs and water pricing gouging landowners. We have this Labor government phasing out drought assistance measures that aid animal welfare. There is no need to rush these changes and punish the regional communities with poorly designed laws.

We all know the Labor-Green alliance is pushing this agenda along and it is all about preferences in South Brisbane and other seats in the metropolitan area. I have no problem with changes that genuinely ensure the best environmental protection is established for the Great Barrier Reef. However, this needs to be done with respect for landowners, agricultural producers and the communities that depend on these industries. This legislation will reinforce that the Palaszczuk Labor government is a truly anti-regions, anti-agriculture and anti-jobs government. This legislation impacts on my electorate.

I hold great concerns for how it will impact the agricultural producers who live in the Injune district and in all reef catchments. Injune is just an hour's drive from my electorate office. It is in Fitzroy catchment and considered by this legislation as part of the Great Barrier Reef catchments. I have a number of landholders who are in this Fitzroy catchment. What a nightmare of restrictions and additional paperwork they will now face to produce food and run their family businesses. This is a monstrosity of regulation and procedure that they will now have to endure on the reef side of their properties and then just over the fence they will be dealing with the Murray-Darling Basin. There are properties with the same landowners who have property on both watersheds in my electorate, and those people are not happy.

There is a saying about carrots and sticks. The same can be said for legislation. Some legislation is a carrot and some legislation is a stick. There is no carrot in this legislation. It is all about stick and, in fact, it is a whopping great log used to belt up landholders and agriculture. I have not even started with the concerns of local governments yet.

I wish to quote the submission of a constituent of mine, Garrey Sellars. Garrey is a third generation primary producer with 39 years experience as a qualified diesel mechanic and the last 26 years as an earthmoving contractor, concentrating on erosion control for landholders with the main aim to minimise soil loss by repairing roads, contour banks and fence lines. He knows a bit about sediment. I would go so far as to say that he knows a lot more about the practical solutions for sediment than the bureaucrats who are being given the decision-making power by this legislation and who reside in Brisbane. This is what he said—

To hold landowners solely accountable for sediment run-off to the Barrier Reef is ludicrous, unfair and unaffordable.

Fining landowners would take away their already stressed financial capacity to correct situations which are out of their control, caused by severe flooding or drought.

A far more positive outcome would be to work with landowners to help them better manage difficult situations rather than a negative fining solution.

Mr Sellars has a question for the minister and he would like an answer. His question is: will national parks that have suffered catastrophic destruction by fire, which leaves the ground in a worse state than classification D, be assessed as accountable for their wilful destruction at the same level as rural landowners when it comes to fining? It should be noted that these fires which have burnt millions of hectares in the Great Barrier Reef catchment zone are not a climate change event but a man-made event, due to mismanagement and a lack of foresight. The minister needs to answer Mr Sellars. When her own department mismanages state owned land, like they have in Garrey's region, will the government pay the same level of fines as rural landowners? Garrey would like an answer.

I turn now to the concerns of local governments in the Great Barrier Reef catchment. The concerns of the Burdekin Shire Council mirror the concerns of many other stakeholders when they say—

Unfortunately, the proposals seem to focus wholly towards protection of the reef with no regard for the impact on the community and the flow on effects from greatly increased administrative, energy, monetary and opportunity costs in supporting human populations in north and far north Queensland.

Council believes that the science being used to support some of the measures proposed is flawed.

The Local Government Association of Queensland, while supportive of the intent to reduce the impacts of poor water quality on the Great Barrier Reef, remains opposed to the increased regulation of local governments' relevant activities, specifically sewage treatment plants. In summary, the basis for the LGAQ's position is that it is unreasonable to propose to further regulate local government STPs to achieve a 'no net decline' outcome while there is insufficient evidence that local government STP impacts overall are significant and warrant additional costs of increased regulation of all the STPs in the reef catchment and—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stewart): Order! Member for Warrego, can you adjourn the debate please?