




Speech By  
**David Crisafulli**

**MEMBER FOR BROADWATER**

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

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (3.10 pm): One of my earliest memories is sitting on the mudguard of a tractor as my father fertilised ratoon paddocks. In those days there was no science. Fertilising was done by a spreader box. The fertiliser would go in and would be sprayed willy-nilly. I also have memories of dad pulling up with a spray unit and pouring chemical into that spray unit, guessing at what was needed to do the right thing to grow a crop. Times have changed. Today on my father's farm not one grain of fertiliser is applied above the soil. The spraying of chemicals is so scientific that what is applied is measured down to the millimetre. The evolution of this story is shared not just by one family in one sector; it is shared across the state.

The other day in Dalby, I had the great pleasure of talking to Andrew Johnston and his crew at Dalby Rural Supplies. To see the technology that that firm is implementing in this era is something that, as Australians, we should be proud of. They have reduced chemical output by over 90 per cent by using technology that identifies weeds. I thank the member for Condamine for introducing me to that fine farming family.

My father loves farming. He also loves fauna. I have seen, through good practices and a commercial imperative, what has happened on his farm. In the past decade alone, his fertiliser use, particularly with urea, which is one of the key issues with reef run-off, is down by 50 per cent in some paddocks. In other paddocks, chemical usage is down by 20 per cent. I know that the two industries can coexist.

My wife, Tegan, and I love the industry. To this day, we own two very small farms. Both are leased, so this legislation will have an infinitesimal impact on us financially. However, it gives me a deep understanding of the importance of agriculture to small towns. As shadow tourism minister, I have had an exposure to the importance of tourism and the importance of the reef to small communities. The government would have us believe that only one side can exist and only one side can thrive. That is not true. The truth is that if we continue to progress, if we continue to do the right thing, if we continue to incentivise and put money on the table, both industries can and must survive for the sake of this state's economy.

Unfortunately, both sides of the debate have sought to use the health of the reef as a political weapon against the other. Both sides have done that. One side would have us believe that nothing that comes off a farm has an impact and they—

**Ms Enoch** interjected.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I take the interjection from the minister, although I am not sure she heard what I said. One side would have us believe that nothing that comes off a farm has an impact and they seek to mix up sediment and nutrient to do so. That is not fair. It is not fair on the environmental movement to push that agenda. Equally, some environmentalists say that there is no way that agriculture can occur and that the reef is dead.

The minister referred to some quotes of mine from the *Australian*. I thank the minister for that, as I intended to use those quotes later on. There is a reason why I dived on the Great Barrier Reef. It was because, to use a word that has been used in this House quite a bit today, there was a void that needed filling. We have armies of people who are not prepared to stand up and say that the reef is recovering from things such as coral bleaching and cyclones. That does not give us an excuse not to do more. We must continue to improve our practices in things such as agriculture and the urban environment, which this bill does not discuss. We must continue to improve our practices for the sake of that mighty asset. In her contribution, which I will address later, the minister articulated very clearly how important the reef is.

The main crux of this debate—and I urge every person who makes a contribution to at the very least address this point—is that today we are asking this parliament to blindly hand over powers to set the farming practices of industries throughout this state to an unelected bureaucrat. In this House there are 93 members who were elected by their communities—different communities, great communities. We are accountable to those communities. This legislation hands the power to set farming practices to an unelected bureaucrat. That is scary. That is not good government. Every day I will argue for the need for better enforcement and better standards. When changes are made, I want to see this House debate them. I want to see the members for Cairns, Townsville—

**An opposition member:** Mackay.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:**—Mackay and Maryborough come into this place to debate these standards having looked their communities in the eye, because today we are handing over responsibility. What this means is that in the future when changes are made we will see hands thrown up and hear, 'It wasn't my responsibility.' A little later in my contribution I will have more to say about those members and the safeguards.

In the past week, we saw something masquerading as a government rebellion against the cabinet. I have some advice for those who are planning rebellions. When you are doing the old 'get the backbencher to throw up a Dorothy Dixier midway through to make them look like they had a win', do not coordinate members from different regions to do that on the same day, because the media clips pick it up.

I do not think that the member for Mackay and the three members from Townsville all woke up on the same day determined to say, 'I'm fighting this government to not have any changes for the next five years.' Even if they did and even if it was the forcefulness of those members that made the minister today say that there will be no changes for five years, I can tell the House what that guarantees. It means there will be no change to the legislation that provides the power to the unelected bureaucrat to change these rules every day of the week. That is what we are saying. It is a five-year—

**Ms Enoch:** Incorrect.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** More on that later, Minister—stand by. It is a five-year blank cheque to continue to abrogate the responsibility of this House.

There are other issues in this legislation which must be condemned and debated. One of them is the mandating of the collection of data. I am going to read an extract from the legislation and then we are going to go on a little journey and explore what it means. I refer to the collection of data relating to the 'production, distribution, supply or use of an agricultural ERA product, fertiliser or chemical'. That is pretty broad.

I will tell members what I read into that. I certainly read that that pits grower against farm consultant—no doubt about that. If someone engages somebody in good faith to get advice then that person is all of a sudden bound by this legislation to, dare I say it, compromise an engagement in good faith. It certainly pits grower against supplier. All of a sudden the guy people go to buy their fertiliser from has to keep a dossier. Hope they have not brought an extra bag for their neighbour because they might have Big Brother coming to knock on their door to ask why they needed an extra bag of fertiliser.

Do members want to know something? I read the supply or use of an agricultural ERA product, fertiliser or chemical relating to the production, distribution or supply and I wonder whether it pits on-farm worker against farm owner. If that is the case, that truly is a sad day for the relationship.

**Ms Enoch** interjected.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Minister, in your contribution you can rule that out.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr McArdle): Member, direct your comments through the chair, thank you.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** The minister is able to rule that out in her contribution. Unless those words are changed, I fear the worst. I certainly understand how that works between grower and consultant and grower and supplier. I fear Orwellian like powers—the kind that pits people against farmers who just

want to feed the nation, who just want to do the right thing by their family, who have been part of the journey that we have witnessed to better agricultural standards and who want to keep doing it for the sake of the environment, for the sake of their hip pocket and for the sake of the next generation.

It has been shameful the way people have been treated during this process. Less than two weeks ago in parliament the member for Kawana moved that this debate occur in Townsville where we had an army of people wanting to have their say. We were told that it was not ready to be debated. Hallelujah. We have had a lot of science in a short of period of time, but here it is. I would have liked to have thought that real consultation occurred.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister for Education.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I will take the interjection from the education minister. Do you know what real consultation on something this significant looks like? It looks like a Premier who would be prepared to meet with these people. The Premier of this state has not been willing to meet these industry bodies on this legislation. Can members imagine Peter Beattie not meeting groups on something like this? Can members imagine that? The Premier of this state is refusing to meet these group who represent thousands of people across dozens of industries.

In my many negotiations and briefings with these bodies I gave them advice to deal with the minister in good faith because the minister is not a malicious person and is someone who will listen. I also gave them the advice to engage with the Premier. I would have thought, with all the machinations and the circus that has happened over there and with the removal of the Deputy Premier's power, that maybe a Premier from the right faction of the Labor Party might have been able to strike a balance between good environmental protection and protection for workers. I would have thought that the agenda of the noisy Greens, who have run this government for five years, might have been put to bed, but clearly not. Still we have a Premier who owes her existence to a group who do not share her values or indeed the values of the traditional base of the Australian Labor Party.

We continue to hear about scientific consensus—a statement which was produced as part of the *Reef 2050 water quality plan 2017-2022*. If one reads that scientific consensus it says we must act, and act we must. That consensus talks about the value of changing practice through voluntary means. It talks about the need for greater investment to allow this change to occur and it uses the word 'collaboration'. It talks about farmers working with the community and with government. It talks about the need for reform to be done in a manner that will take people on board.

I fear that so much of this decision to put in place this legislation is politically motivated. These results could be achieved by using strengthened BMPs, by using strengthened investment and by ensuring those doing the wrong thing feel the full force of the law—the laws set by this parliament. I will tell members what it has been set up for. It has been set up because one side of the House will not support a blank cheque to an unelected person and that side of the House will be branded all sorts of things about being anti the reef. I say to the minister and the government: every day between now and the end of October next year I will make the message clear that only one side of the House will embark on the environmental reforms needed while protecting agricultural industries. Only one side of the House will do this because only one side of the House does not owe its sole existence to a group of people—the hard core Greens—who keep them there and keep them in survival mode.

I wish to make a contribution around the minister's second reading speech. The minister quite clearly raises the two major imperatives we must deal with in our battle for better reef protection and better reef quality. The minister has outlined both of them. She is right on both of them. One is the need to act on climate change. The second is improving water quality. The first is one that we all must do more on as a society. All of us have to do more. The second is the one that fits most within our bailiwick and that is improving water quality. I will strive to do that every day. I am confident that we are able to do that in a manner that does not have to pit farmers against the community and does not have to hand over power to somebody who is not accountable.

The minister talks about some of the low accreditation numbers through BMP across many sectors. What the minister does not highlight is how many people have reached the BMP standard without getting formal notification and how many people are on that journey and closing in on it very fast. I must acknowledge the member for Glass House, who is here today. It was the member for Glass House who, as environment minister, embarked on the BMP process. It was brave. There were those who pushed back very hard and he stood his ground. It is something that we must do more on.

The minister touches on incentives. She parrots figures like \$13.8 million, \$5 million and a whopping \$1 million for the banana growers. I went to the committee hearings. I thank the member for Scenic Rim for allowing me to take his place at those committee hearings. I went to those hearings

because I thought it was important to hear people at the coalface. Despite all of the powerful messages from the industry groups, the contribution that rang the most alarm bells for me came from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies during the hearings in Townsville. It was a single line where that body said that, in order to embark on effective implementation of what the government is proposing, we would need \$1 billion per year every year for 10 years. Please do not come in here with a \$5 million trinket and \$1 million for the banana growers and somehow think that all is solved. We are a long, long way from solving a problem when we are talking about money running into the tens of millions if we want to embark on radical, hard core, immediate reform and handing over blanket powers.

The minister says any changes to law must go to public consultation. To those who have embarked on this journey in recent times, I am not so convinced that they like the form of public consultation they have just embarked on that was part of the debate on this legislation. Unless at some stage today the minister is going to set some standards, the parliament is never going to see it again. I am not so convinced that people have a lot of faith in the process having been through this sham.

The minister thanked the committee for their input. I welcome the efforts of all of those on the committee. I note the member for Noosa, who is here and who attended the hearings and made an excellent contribution. I thank her as well. Despite hearing all of the desire for people to do better, despite being told about the lunacy of pitting farmer against consultant and farmer against supplier, despite people saying, 'If you want tougher standards, debate them. Put them in the legislation and come in here and have a debate,' despite all of that, the committee made one recommendation—that the bill be passed.

The minister mentioned her visits to farms. I thank her for that. From those whom I have spoken to, they have all said that the minister was sympathetic in her views, was genuine with her time and gave them a fair hearing. The significance of their story has not been reflected in what we are debating today. Indeed, we do not even have the regulations here. We have a draft version which got shopped around to groups at two minutes to midnight.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** It was last night. I am not sure if I can take an 'Oh,' for an interjection but, if I can, may I? They got it last night. We have not got it. This parliament has not got it. We are being asked to vote on a massive piece of legislation which hands over blanket powers through regulation. I would not be comfortable handing blanket powers over through regulation regardless, but we are being asked to do that and we have not even seen the regulation—and so it goes on.

In my short time remaining I flag that the opposition will be moving amendments to this legislation. They are the sorts of common-sense things that I have been saying—the things that the member for Noosa, the member for Stretton and other members on the committee heard in our travels around the state. Those amendments will provide the last chance—at the last chance saloon—for those members who have gone missing in action, for those members who thought that a coordinated, 'Oh, we're going to get a five-year stay of execution'—the old, 'Here's this from the Premier's office. Put your name where the Xs are. Make sure you don't put the name of your neighbouring seat holder. Get your name right.' They thought that somehow that was going to be the highlight, that they had had a go. Well, it is not, because the industry groups are lining up. They are lining up—

**Mr Harper** interjected.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. The member for Thuringowa does not belong in those seats and cannot interject—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr McArdle): Just hold on. You can take a point of order, but I will run the House. The member for Thuringowa cannot interject from that position. He knows that.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is the last chance for members in areas such as Cairns, where 384 jobs are on the line; Townsville, where over 700 sugar jobs are on the line—

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Capalaba, thank you. You also know the rules.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:**—Mackay, where 1,783 jobs are on the line; and Maryborough, where 441 jobs are on the line.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister for Education, thank you.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** This is a big moment. While those opposite will seek to use this debate as a tool one way or another to say, 'These people do not support better quality water run-off and these people do not support the reef,' I hope I have been able to make it clear in this contribution that I will not walk

away from doing more. We must do more. Every one of us—every industry, every person, every local government—must do more, but there have been amazing improvements. We owe it to our kids for those improvements to continue.

In closing, I make the point that times have changed. The young girl who today is riding shotgun on her father's tractor does it in an air-conditioned cab. She does it with the best science and the best quality agricultural pursuits in the world. Improvements are needed by working together, not by pitting farmer against community and, above all, not by allowing an unelected bureaucrat to determine how farming and the environment can go hand in hand. With that, the LNP will be opposing this bill.