




Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.37 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the second reading debate of the Nature Conservation (Special Wildlife Reserves) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Like the other members on this side of the House, I will be opposing this terrible bill. Of course I am because it is bad law, to use the words of Bill Potts. Bill Potts and I do not share a lot of things in common, but I can say that I am in absolute agreement with him on this, and rightly so.

Numerous issues have been raised by a plethora of stakeholders over the ambiguities and uncertainties relating to special wildlife reserves. Whilst we have heard the minister and government members talk about how uncertainty will be fixed by the amendments, I think they will make things worse. This is yet another example of this Labor government—this city-centric, Brisbane based Labor government—taking the stick to the people of my electorate of Southern Downs and other regional electorates.

The position was scrutinised by many stakeholders and we have seen some very illuminating responses from groups such as the Property Council, the Queensland Law Society, the Resources Council, the Queensland Farmers' Federation and AgForce. They have recognised the fundamental flaws in this bill and in the very significant statement that I referred to earlier by Bill Potts. He referred explicitly to this bill as 'bad law'. The Queensland Law Society specifically 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' (as determined by the Minister) under the definition of 'State interest';
- the second branch of the proposed section which appears may be applied so as to encompass land areas that do not fit easily into the definition of 'State interest'.

As my honourable friend the member for Broadwater, the shadow environment minister, remarked, this is a very far-reaching discretion. This enables almost unfettered power for the minister to declare a special wildlife reserve. He also said, rather delicately I felt, that in the hands of the wrong minister that could be a danger to landholders everywhere. I would say that we already have a government that does not have the interests of our landholders at heart. We have already seen the miserable attacks on landholders in my electorate of Southern Downs and in other regional electorates in the vegetation management bill with an absolute utter lack of consultation and with no care whatsoever for the absurdities in the law, just an attack on the bush in order to secure Greens preferences to save seats like South Brisbane.

I heard the minister say, 'Well, you don't understand it. The people who provided submissions didn't understand the bill. It's really not that bad.' Excuse me, but I would say that I do not believe this government. Why should we trust this government? On a day-by-day basis I write to the minister about absurdities where the stick has been taken terribly to residents in my electorate of Southern Downs, but

the absurdities are not recognised. They are dismissed summarily simply because there is this institutionalised presumption that there are no votes out there in the bush for the Labor Party and it thinks, 'We'll stick with what we know best—the radical Greens in Brisbane.'

We have seen the Vegetation Management Act. We have seen the cartoonistically ludicrous references to the black-throated finch as a way of desperately holding up the exploration and the exploitation of coal in our state. We see blue dots applied to people's properties where the very presence of the blue dot threatens the species which is supposed to be protected, but nobody wants to know anything about that. The individual property owner can just simply pay the bill and live with it. The environment department is brimful of lefties. In recent times we have seen some appalling appointments to the department. It is well known to be dysfunctional for the people who have to live under the decisions that are handed down by the department. We have seen extreme green activists appointed to extremely sensitive positions in the department. In my view that says to me that the department is not fit to make—

**Ms ENOCH:** I rise to a point of order on relevance to the long title of the bill.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms McMillan): Thank you, Minister. Member, I remind you to come back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr LISTER:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the things that have been canvassed at length in the House today and have been allowed by a succession of Speakers in the chair.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, I have asked you to come back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr LISTER:** I am on the long title of the bill, Madam Deputy Speaker. With regard to the environment department, I have no faith in its ability or its impartiality to administer something like this. As for the ministers, we have seen that this government has been beholden utterly to the extreme left, the extreme Greens, of this state, and the landholders whom I represent have no faith whatsoever in the way that these special wildlife reserves will be decided. Today I heard other members in the House such as the member for Stretton saying, 'Why would we worry about it? We have a responsible government.' I would suggest that the member for Stretton might like to go to Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe, Warwick or Millmerran and tell people in the street that. They would not agree with that.

**Mr Pegg** interjected.

**Mr LISTER:** I heard the member for Jordan—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I just remind the member for Stretton to return to your seat if you are going to interject. Secondly, what was your point of order?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** It was everything to do with the member for Stretton's location. He is not a frontbencher.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, member. Member for Stretton, return to your seat or leave the chamber, thank you. I remind the member for Southern Downs: do not argue with the chair.

**Mr LISTER:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We heard the member for Jordan, in the precise language of a technocrat, tell us how wonderful this bill will be. I suggested to the member for Jordan that she ought to come to Southern Downs or to Gregory or some of the other electorates about the place where this is going to hurt. It is appalling legislation. I echo the concerns of the deputy chair of the committee, the member for Scenic Rim, who restated the minister's assurances that the 100-metre buffer zones are not going to affect grazing. That is not what the department has said. I am not satisfied and nor are the people on this side of the House that that is the case. I say again: with the track record of this government and the complexion of the department, how are we to know that for sure?

We have heard concerns from neighbours. What are they going to be facing with these special wildlife reserves? If the government's track record is to be believed—and I think it ought to be, because past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour—those places will become a mess. They will be fire risks. They will be full of pests such as wild dogs and pigs to invade neighbours' properties. Who is going to be looking after these? Who is going to be making sure that they are maintained, because if the government cannot even maintain its own backyard—its own state forests and its own national parks—what faith can we have in it? I think it was the member for Gregory who made the point that it is a common phrase in the bush that this state government is the worst neighbour anyone can have, and that is absolutely true. Try finding someone in the department who is responsible for a common fence between a state forest or a national park and someone's own property. It is nigh on impossible. It is not looking after what it has now, yet it wants to have more of it to make the lives of those in the bush even harder again.

This law is too broad. The powers conferred upon the minister are unacceptable and in this House there are many of us who feel that that power has great potential to be misused to the disadvantage of hardworking farmers in electorates like mine in Southern Downs. I have talked about blue dots and the way the department behaves. I was approached by a delegation of beekeepers the other day who said to me that the department of environment takes 114 days—a disgraceful 114 days—to turn around an application for a beekeeping permit in a national park, and I can see the contorted look from the minister on the other side of the chamber. That is a disgrace, but it is an indication of the lack of awareness and the lack of care that the department and the minister and this government have for people who are creating things from nothing, paying taxes, paying for us as politicians and paying for public servants in this state.

This law is an affront to everybody who is productive and to every Queenslander—and that means every Queenslander—who depends on a strong and vibrant agricultural sector. It is an affront to the property rights of individuals and it will achieve nothing to safeguard the environment. It is typical of the hollow posturing—the virtue signalling—of this government to court green votes in the city but with no concern for actual outcomes. I condemn this bill and urge all members in the House not to support it.