




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2019

**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (CLEARING FOR RELEVANT PURPOSES)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (6.06 pm): The Vegetation Management (Clearing for Relevant Purposes) Amendment Bill 2018 attempts to insert unnecessary provisions into the Vegetation Management Act. The need for further legislative change has not been established by those opposite. We already have an appeal mechanism for section 22A determinations through the Judicial Review Act. For some decisions made under the Vegetation Management Act, the landholder also has a right to request an internal review and to follow that with an external review by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The trigger for that process is that the applicant received or was entitled to receive an information notice with the decision.

The act presently requires an information notice to be provided upon request for: a decision to make or not make a property map of assessable vegetation or PMAV requested by a landholder; a decision to not make an area into category X in a PMAV; a decision to issue a stop-work notice or a restoration notice; or a decision to refuse to approve a restoration plan. Between 2013 and the end of 2018, DNRME made 839 determinations under section 22A, of which only 11 or 1.3 per cent were refused. Of those refusals, eight related to HVA or IHVA, that is, high-value agriculture or irrigated high-value agriculture. As a result of HVA and IHVA no longer being relevant purposes, no further requests for a determination in relation to these can now be made.

Between 2013 and the end of 2018, only three refusals have been made relating to other relevant purposes, that is, 0.3 per cent, at a rate of 0.5 per cent refusals per year. The minister has previously said that the government will monitor the rate of requests and refusals under section 22A and, if the need for an additional review and appeal process emerges, will progress a proposal for a more appropriate review and appeal mechanism to be implemented.

It is important that the Palaszczuk government's land clearing laws be allowed to continue to stabilise land clearing rates across Queensland. The Palaszczuk government can do this because we lead the nation and we have the balance right. This House is well aware of what happened the last time the LNP got the reigns of Queensland's land clearing laws. Rates of land clearing more than doubled in Queensland after the LNP abolished virtually all controls, peaking at about two-thirds the rate of the Amazon's deforestation and killing millions of native wildlife.

I note the recent commentary relating to bushfires and the ability to clear and maintain firebreaks. I think it is important to put a couple of facts on the record about the Palaszczuk government's vegetation management framework. Responsible measures to manage firebreaks have always been permitted, and these regulatory exemptions under the vegetation management framework have not changed in 20 years.

Queensland's responsible vegetation management framework includes measures that ensure landholders can protect their property from bushfires, including firebreaks and fire management lines. No approval or notification is needed to clear necessary firebreaks or fire management lines. A fire

management line can, among other uses, be used to access water for firefighting and divide the property into sub-units to allow fuel reduction burning. In an emergency, landholders can do any clearing required by an authorised fire officer. These measures again show that we have the balance of vegetation management right.

I will finish by reflecting on the committee's tour around regional Queensland—

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Ms PUGH: You will get your go, member for Buderim. Thank you very much. This was my very first tour of duty, if you will, as a committee member, and I enjoyed the experience very much. One of the things we heard again and again from stakeholders was that they wanted consistency and clarity. They wanted to be able to go forward with some certainty and know exactly what the rules would be. I think it is really important that we leave the laws in place. We should give the clarity and consistency that our stakeholders were asking for and leave the laws as they are.