




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.15 pm): In rising to make a contribution to this omnibus bill, once again I draw the attention of the House to the Labor government's heavy reliance on omnibus bills where a number of unrelated issues are thrown together in one bill. This not only makes proper scrutiny by the correct committee less straightforward but is also a major obstacle for stakeholders wanting to give the committee input on upcoming legislation that may impact them. The bills are difficult for the media to report and it is confusing for members of the public when searching for amendments that may affect them or their businesses.

Week after week, it seems that we see these bills being used by the Labor government as a strategy to avoid scrutiny. I thought the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was the worst to date. It changed laws affecting the manufacturing, selling, supply and use of paint in the same bill that dealt with prescription of medicinal cannabis, the lawful cremation of human body parts used in schools of anatomy, and a timely payment of exit entitlements from retirement villages. At least this bill has a portfolio related coherence, but it amends some 29 acts and regulations. As the minister's introductory speech made painfully clear, it reads like a BuzzFeed article. As a result, there are parts of the bill I can support and there are parts of the bill about which I have grave concerns. In the short time allowed for this debate I will do my best to air my concerns to the minister.

Clauses 36 and 37 will scrap the annual report by the state government on the ownership of Queensland land by foreign interests. The Commonwealth government maintains a register of foreign landownership but this register is only maintained in a very broad way. It reports, without detail, on the total foreign ownership of land across Australia. In this sense, it does not represent the interests of the state of Queensland and cannot supply the level of detail required so Queenslanders can have informed public discussions about the level of foreign ownership in different segments of the Queensland economy and what that means for Queensland's interests. This is particularly true around agricultural land but also applies to foreign ownership in tourism, residential housing and even essential infrastructure which could include power networks, communication networks, ports, roads and even prisons.

As the AgForce submission to the committee states, the Commonwealth report fails to make detailed comment on who is considered to be 'foreign', particularly in respect of corporations. It also does not define, when the ownership is partial, what level of ownership is required to be reported particularly in respect of leases for terms of five to 25 years.

Queensland has a complicated land tenure system, and information on leasehold by foreign interests is an important detail if we are to see a true picture of the situation. The annual report of the Queensland foreign ownership of land register also provides annual snapshots of the changes in the level of foreign ownership from year to year. This ability to make comparisons over time is vital if Queenslanders are to have an informed discussion about one of the most paramount interests.

It is also vital for the state government to ensure its policy aims are being achieved on the ground. The Australian government report provides none of this, and the removal of this valuable tool is not in Queensland's interest. We will be a state of Sergeant Schultzes who know nothing about our own backyard. Potentially, there are very negative consequences in choosing to be blind.

Clause 45 will allow the state access to private land without the landholder's consent. The rationale is that the government requires this amendment so it can enter and cross private land in order to access state land. This will apply to all land, be it freehold, leasehold or in trust such as Woorabinda's lands. The purpose of the entry is explained as being for control of feral pests, exotic weeds and fire hazard management.

Members have heard me in this chamber on many occasions pleading with this Labor government to be better neighbours in all three areas of land management on state land and in our national parks. This issue is not one of land management; this issue is one around trust, respect and property rights.

If an individual buys a block of land with no access, they have to construct an access. They require a proper survey and a plan, they require local government approval and they foot the bills for the survey, planning, approval and construction of that access. If the state government has obtained land to which it has no access, the rules should be the same. If the state government has allowed its access to be compromised by erosion or lack of maintenance then it should correct this at its own expense.

I have had constituents who neighbour a national park in Gregory tell me that the only way Parks and Wildlife staff, who do a great job, can access part of the park is via the constituents' private road, across the constituents' property. Why? It is because the national park tracks have been allowed to fall into disrepair. This is just irresponsible freeloading. I see it time and time again. The Labor government is shifting costs onto the landholder with one hand and taking away rights with the other.

Every other landholder has to pay their way and provide their own roads so they can fulfil their obligations under various state acts relating to vegetation, environment and biosecurity. The state government should not be bludging. It should be a model of compliance, but that is not—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stevens): Member for Gregory, I do not think 'bludging' is an appropriate parliamentary word. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr MILLAR: I withdraw. The real breach of fundamental legislative principles is highlighted in the AgForce submission to the committee. The amendments will empower the chief executive to authorise access by government officers with no knowledge of, notice to or consent by landholders. There is no other way to see this than as the dismantling of fundamental property rights. Landholders cannot be held responsible for the safety of government employees accessing their land in such a way. Nor can landholders feel such powers will not be abused to assist the government in compiling databases on their property which may trigger targeted action against them, with all the legal costs that may entail.

With the challenges Queensland faces in terms of climate change and food security, the Queensland government should be doing everything it can to build strong and collaborative relationships with Queensland landholders and within industries like agriculture and mining, which are the foundations of our ability to pay our way, yet it seems to me that the Labor government is making a virtue of destroying those relationships as some sort of perverse virtue signalling to green elites. Those green elites do not provide the money to fund our schools or our hospitals, to build our roads or to provide public transport. It is mining and agriculture that do that.

What else do we find in this bill? We find an attack on mining in the form of clause 260. This inserts a new section 141A, allowing the minister to impose, vary or remove a condition on an exploration permit at any time without application, without seeking the views of the holder or any right of appeal. Recently Bill Shorten said that he did not give a thought to sovereign risk. We all heard that comment. Apparently the Labor government here in Queensland are of like mind. They introduced legislative changes that, as the owners and managers of state land, they themselves do not comply with. There is no thought for the risk and the impacts to the state's businesses.

Both the resources industry and the agricultural industry require stability if they are to meet their capital and investment requirements. The Palaszczuk government seems to be dedicated to destroying Queensland's reputation for certainty and stability. A recent survey of global mining companies ranked Queensland behind the Democratic Republic of the Congo for certainty of environmental regulation. We were also poorly rated for regulation duplication and for inconsistency in interpretation of regulations.

Yesterday *Queensland Country Life* reported that AgForce will destroy 10 years of best practice management data from Great Barrier Reef catchments to protect the privacy of individual landholders. They fear that when the environment minister's new laws are passed the data could be seized by the

department and used to victimise farmers, so we lose all of that knowledge. That is what happens when you staff your environment and science departments with activists. That is what happens when you do not listen and learn.

I implore this minister and all ministers to stop doing this. Instead, they should try to develop trust with the people of Queensland. Our farmers, our graziers, are true environmentalists when it comes to Queensland's landscapes. They do everything right because they want to protect the land they own so that they can pass it on to future generations. It is up to the minister and the Labor government—whatever government is in power—to have a relationship with our landholders and our mining companies to make sure we continue to see investment in Queensland. That is the way we should be doing it.