



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2019

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

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (12.00 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The LNP oppose the bill. Incredibly, the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee reported on 26 April 2019 recommending that the bill be passed with no other recommendations whatsoever. I draw to the attention of members the four-page statement of reservation that has been put into the document by the LNP members which outline many of the reasons why this bill is flawed. The member for Theodore and the member for Scenic Rim have made it quite clear that they were not supportive of simply recommending that the bill be passed. It simply cannot be done.

According to the explanatory notes, the primary policy objective of the bill is to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to strengthen Great Barrier Reef protection measures to improve the quality of the water entering the Great Barrier Reef. I have spoken about this aspect of committee work in the past. Why is it that the ministers refuse to accept the evidence as provided by the committee? The committees go out into the community. They talk to the stakeholders in the community. They have conversations right across the state with community members, people who are going to be impacted by legislation, and yet it is all ignored. In this case the committee has completely ignored the recommendations and advice of the communities that will be impacted by this legislation and most certainly the minister has done the same thing.

The LNP will be proposing some amendments, the first of which is the removal of the head of power in the legislation that allows the government to set requirements for the collection of data. This amendment seeks to remove the overreaching provision that enables the government to mandate the collection of any data relating to the production, manufacture, distribution, supply or use of an agricultural ERA product, fertiliser product or agricultural chemical.

Another amendment will be the removal of the power to set ERA minimum regulated standards and BMP practice standards from the chief executive and replace it with a requirement that all standards are to be passed as non-exempt subordinate legislation under the bill. This amendment seeks to require all standards, minimum and best management practice programs, to be prescribed by regulation rather than set by an unelected department chief executive.

Thirdly, the LNP will move an amendment to introduce a requirement for a 10-year grace period to enable a staged implementation of minimum requirements in the Burnett-Mary catchment region. This amendment seeks to allow a phase-in period for the Burnett-Mary catchment region set at the same time frame as other regulated regions since regulation was introduced in 2009.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's anti-region, anti-farmer, anti-jobs agenda has driven many in the agricultural industry to revolt against these unfair reef laws. That has been very clearly enunciated by those witnesses to the committee through the very, very short process that was undertaken. Industry groups and farmers are sending a clear message to the Palaszczuk Labor government that the reef laws are unfair on farmers. These unfair reef laws will cost jobs in regional Queensland.

The LNP firmly supports the industry-led best management practice programs it funded whilst last in government. There is no reason why Labor cannot support local jobs and protect the reef. It does not have to be one or the other. That is something that is constantly referred to by the witnesses to the committee in their contribution: it does not have to be one or the other. It is common sense to work together to make things work properly. Alarm bells have been rung by all industries that these regressive anti-farming, anti-jobs, anti-region laws will be forced upon.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's unfair reef laws have been met with a huge backlash from industry groups, including Canegrowers, AgForce, the Australian Banana Growers' Council, Growcom and the Queensland Farmers' Federation. The state's cattle and grazing industry group, AgForce, has been holding rallies throughout the state to protest Labor's anti-farming reef laws. These are unprecedented types of activity. These organisations generally work on behalf of their industries and speak to government in common-sense approach, but they have been forced down the road of holding rallies to try to raise more and more awareness, all falling on the deaf ears of those opposite. The Australian Banana Growers' Council has described the incoming laws as devastating, while Growcom has questioned farmers' ability to continue to absorb the costs of environmental regulation.

Farmers have been blindsided by these regulations and deserve to be listened to. They certainly have not been listened to at all in this process. It is completely unacceptable that Labor is going to ram these reef regulations through without listening to the very people these laws will impact. As we have seen so many times before, the Labor government continues to treat regional Queenslanders like second-class citizens. Canegrowers represents more than 4,000 farming businesses up and down the coast and it has taken the extraordinary step of running TV ads against the unfair reef laws as well. Once again these are unbelievable activities from these types of organisation which in the past have just quietly gone about their business and made their points and received common sense out of government, but clearly that is not working in this particular case.

Queensland's \$4 billion cane industry provides more than 22,600 direct and indirect jobs throughout the state. The majority of them are in regional towns. The sugar industry is already doing it tough with low international prices for sugar. That is putting pressure on the viability of existing cane farms and mills. In its submission to the reef bill, the Australian Sugar Milling Council highlighted specifically—

... the Queensland economy would be quite negatively impacted if the focus on improvement of reef water quality led to a significant reduction in the productivity and size of the State's sugar industry, and agriculture more broadly.

The ASMC further added that Labor's laws and regulatory approach could have a 'far-reaching and disastrous impact from an economic, social and environmental perspective'. In other words, what we are talking about here is a situation where the government is once again making it clear it does not care about farmers, it certainly does not care about regional Queensland and it certainly does not care about jobs in regional Queensland. Matt Leighton, from Bundaberg Canegrowers, stated—

It's hard to think that someone who may never have stepped onto a cane farm or a farm, or doesn't have an agronomic background, is telling people who live and breathe and work on their farms ... what they need to do on their farms.

In a nutshell, this bill is not only wrong for regional Queensland and for farming communities; but also wrong for all Queenslanders.