




Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**

**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2019

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.42 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill was introduced in the House in February 2019 by the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, and the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee reported in April 2019 with one recommendation that the bill be passed.

In accordance with the explanatory notes, the key 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. The bill aims to achieve its objective via a regulatory framework targeting some of the following areas: the reef water quality targets for nutrients and sediments; producers moving to standards that align with recognised benchmarks for agricultural industries; existing industry-led best management practice programs or the development of new programs; and new development can occur without compromising the water quality gains made to date, while also minimising the regulatory burden on existing activities.

The LNP has concerns with this and has proposed three amendments to the bill: one, removal of the head of power in the legislation that allows the government to set requirements for the collection of data; two, removal of the power to set ERA minimum regulated standards and BMP practice standards from the chief executive and replaced with a requirement that all standards are to be passed as non-exempt subordinate legislation under the bill; and, three, introduction of a requirement for a 10-year grace period to enable a staged implementation of minimum requirements in the Burnett Mary catchment region.

This is just another example of the Palaszczuk government trying to blame our state's agricultural industries for everything from terminal cancer to ingrown toenails, from coral bleaching to whales beaching themselves, and from drought to flooding rains, in order to shore up inner-city green votes. The Palaszczuk Labor government is anti regions, anti farmers and anti jobs. It always has been and always will be. This government's continued attack on agriculture has driven many in the industry to protest loudly and clearly against these unfair reef laws. Agricultural industry groups and farmers are conveying a strong message to the Palaszczuk Labor government—that the reef laws are unfair on farmers and will cost more jobs in regional Queensland, jobs that these everyday Queenslanders cannot afford to lose.

The LNP is a strong supporter of industry-led best management practice programs. That is why when the LNP were in government they funded these programs. Only the LNP will ensure farmers continue to get a fair reef regulations deal with a proper consultation process in place—a process that involves listening and considering the impact on farmers and their communities.

The cotton industry is a perfect example of an agricultural industry that made the decision to self-regulate by creating a farm and environmental management system for cotton growers ensuring that Australian cotton is produced according to world's best practice. The original myBMP program

began in 1997 so there has been over 22 years of best management practice. It was then updated in 2006 and 2007 and subsequently relaunched in 2010 with an online version—all funded by the industry and growers. The model used in the cotton industry has seen changes to other sectors of Australian agriculture.

The benefits of an industry self-regulating rather than being forced by government are immense, including safer farm workplaces, healthier natural environments, reduced input costs, better run farm businesses and improved community health. After all, the industry and farmers are the ones who designed this system with a stringent but practical auditing procedure to make sure their industry was sustainable, environmentally friendly and benefited the communities that are reliant upon cotton growers.

There was no resistance to the implementation of myBMP—no rallies and no protests. Farmers could identify the benefits and knew their input into the design was listened to. Perhaps the government should have looked at this model. There is absolutely no reason why Labor cannot support local jobs and protect the reef. They seem to think it has to be one or the other. I thought governments were supposed to be the problem solvers, not problem makers, ensuring the best outcome for all individuals and industries potentially impacted by changes to legislation.

The sugar industry in Queensland has an economic value of approximately \$4 billion and supports over 22,500 jobs. Why should it be treated like this? The Premier did not even have the good grace to debate the reef laws in North Queensland when she had the opportunity to do so at the recent Townsville sittings and face the thousands of graziers and canegrowers who will be directly impacted by this bill. There is not an agricultural industry group that has not expressed their dismay at these reef laws—Canegrowers, AgForce, the Australian Banana Growers' Council, Growcom and the Queensland Farmers' Federation to name a few. These industry bodies have large memberships, with the Canegrowers group representing over 4,000 farming businesses. This Labor government continues to think it has the right to treat regional Queensland like second-class citizens.

The LNP has a long history of protecting one of Queensland's greatest assets, the Great Barrier Reef. When in government, the LNP introduced tough laws to protect the Great Barrier Reef by increasing the fines for serious environmental harm to the reef to over \$3.5 million or five years in jail. This was an opportunity for Labor to support these laws. However, they chose to vote against them. They still stand firmly behind their environmental credentials though. The Bligh Labor government had planned to dump 38 million tonnes of dredge spoil into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Thankfully, they did not get the opportunity to do this. When Campbell Newman became Premier of the LNP government, they acted immediately to develop a plan to dispose of dredge material on land and reduce the dumping on the reef by 90 per cent, and the spoil was not dumped in the marine park zone.

The Newman LNP government invested \$35 million each year to improve water quality including support for graziers and canegrowers to develop best farm management programs and adopt reef-friendly practices. The LNP can stand proudly behind their environmental credentials, unlike those opposite. The LNP maintains a strong history of protecting the Great Barrier Reef, unlike the many Labor governments who have approved extensive port developments, for example, without a single thought for protecting the World Heritage values of the reef. When in government, the LNP delivered upon their election promise and found real solutions to protect this iconic World Heritage site. The LNP accepts the science and works with industries. It has done more to address the issues facing the reef than any other previous Labor government.