Speech By

Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (CLEARING FOR RELEVANT PURPOSES) AMENDMENT BILL

Ms LEAHY (Warrego—LNP) (5.31 pm), continuing: I rise to contribute to the debate of the Vegetation Management (Clearing for Relevant Purposes) Amendment Bill. This bill does not go far enough when it comes to high-value agriculture. The private member's bill seeks to create an obligation on the chief executive to issue an information notice where an application for clearing as assessed under section 22A of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 has been rejected. The LNP proposed a much more proactive approach for landholders. In regard to our proposals for vegetation management laws, we contend there should be high-value agriculture and irrigated high-value agriculture opportunities for landholders.

Further, the LNP has proposed that high-value and irrigated high-value properly made applications can be assessed against guidelines developed in genuine consultation with industry. Furthermore, the LNP proposed a deemed approval process, giving even more certainty and a streamlined approval process to landholders who make these applications. Under the LNP's plan, landholders would not need to go through a time-consuming and possibly expensive appeals process to the chief executive officer as outlined in the private member's bill.

The LNP proposals are more workable for landholders. They reduce red tape, deliver that certainty that landholders are absolutely craving in this area and do so much more than what is proposed in this bill. Amendments to the private member's bill tabled in the last sitting fall short of delivering certainty for landholders—something they had through the self-assessable fodder harvesting code delivered in government by the LNP. The private member's bill amendments only apply during a drought declaration period. They do not take into account those landholders who use mulga as fodder as part of their property management during non-drought periods.

The LNP had in place a workable fodder harvesting code when in government, and that worked during drought periods and when there was no drought. Why? Because landholders need to be able to deal with the thickening of vegetation. They do not necessarily have the resources during drought periods to do that and, further, drought is not a time when they can re-establish grass growth in areas being rehabilitated from vegetation thickening. Landholders need to be able to harvest and thin mulga and manage its incredible ability to thicken. They say that if you take down one mulga tree 10 others will come to its funeral—and that is so correct when you see what is happening across my electorate.

The LNP's proposed amendments to Labor's vegetation management laws continue the retention of a fodder harvesting area management plan and allow for the self-assessment of mulga to continue in drought periods and non-drought periods. The private member's bill keeps the red tape during the non-drought periods. The LNP propose that the red tape be cut for good—not just in the drought.

The shadow minister and I have been out speaking to landholders in my electorate. In fact, we spent a whole day with landholders at Charleville listening to their concerns with the Labor government's vegetation management laws. It is simple: the people in my electorate have been managing and harvesting mulga for 100 years and fodder harvesting is not tree clearing. Landholders tell me that they have more mulga now than they had 100 years ago.

These landholders want a plan from the LNP. They want what was delivered when the LNP was in government. They want workable, practical vegetation management landscape laws that cut through the red tape, streamline the processes and give certainty—drought or no drought—to the ability to harvest fodder and manage the thickening of that vegetation. This is so important to them, because there are many areas across my electorate that have lots of acres of mulga which they need to manage appropriately.