




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (CLEARING FOR RELEVANT PURPOSES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (5.35 pm): I rise to speak against the Vegetation Management (Clearing for Relevant Purposes) Amendment Bill 2018, a private member's bill introduced by the Katter's Australian Party. I am passionate both about a strong, growing economy with jobs for locals and about protecting our environment for generations to come. However, an analysis of this private member's bill provides very little in terms of how it would support long-term economic growth and sustainable environmental protections into the future. These are the key criteria on which this legislation should be analysed.

Let us be clear: Queensland had vegetation management laws in place from 2004 to 2013. During that time, those laws were in place in communities in the Cook electorate—and the Cook electorate continued to grow and prosper. That was until the Newman government scrapped the laws that it promised to protect at the 2012 election. The 2013 amendments to the Vegetation Management Act 1999 allowed a landholder to apply for development approval to allow broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation for high-value agriculture or irrigated high-value agriculture.

The former LNP government should be considered in this debate because scrapping the vegetation management laws had a huge impact on the environment, resulting in wholesale land clearing for high-value agriculture and irrigated high-value agriculture. The flow-on effect meant that near-threatened species were at risk of becoming smaller or in decline, and there is a concern for their environment.

The amendments put forward in this private member's bill will look only to abolish the strong framework already in place and, if anything, strip any accountability and transparency measures that are there to protect our greatest asset, our natural environment and biodiversity. It is absolutely necessary that Queensland has a strong vegetation management framework for managing a valuable resource on behalf of its people. I would like to see a vegetation management framework that delivers a simple and effective process where the application of these protections is judged in the context of the local needs and demands across the most diverse communities in our state.

Under the current legislation there are protections for local landholders. In the cape, landholders can continue to apply for other types of clearing permitted by the vegetation management framework. Landholders in the cape can also clear under the accepted development codes and exemptions for a range of activities. These activities include clearing for property infrastructure; weed control and public safety; and exemptions to clear to construct and maintain fences, firebreaks and necessary infrastructure.

We have had this legislation in the past and we continue to grow local opportunities. I am confident that we have a strong future with a strong vegetation management framework in place not only to support the continued economic growth but also to achieve long-term environmental outcomes that we need to build a strong future for generations to come. As I said at the start of my speech, I do not support this bill.