




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

BIODISCOVERY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.46 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the biodiscovery and environmental protection bills. As the member for the Burdekin region, which is home to so many of Queensland's major resource projects and the home to crucial agricultural activities, I take a particular interest in aspects particularly of the environmental protection bill that we are debating here today.

Effective rehabilitation of resource industry extraction activities is a major issue for both agricultural landholders and long-term environmental health. As the shadow minister for mines, I pay particular attention to the rehabilitation of our mine sites and I want to add my voice to those speaking about the state of those abandoned mine sites across Queensland which are a blight on our state and a symptom of years of neglect and mismanagement.

Our resource sector is keeping this state afloat. When we you talk mining, people have images of huge holes in the ground and mountains of overburden. I want to also acknowledge today that most of our mining companies are doing the right thing. When you travel across the state you see some excellent examples of rehabilitation taking place. When I go to mine sites, I always make sure that I inspect their rehabilitation sites and ascertain what their plans are in terms of how they are going to rehabilitate those mining operations. I have stood in paddocks of grass over my head that have been grazed by livestock. That clearly demonstrates that land can be rehabilitated back to its natural state. I think we need to pay due credit to those companies that have taken the initiative and are doing the right thing across Queensland.

Regrettably, the Palaszczuk Labor government has consistently failed Queenslanders to address key mining rehabilitation failures and the significant environmental risks posed by abandoned mines. AgForce rightly recommended that the proposed Rehabilitation Commissioner needs to have the regulatory power to instruct the government to enforce rehabilitation compliance requirements. However, it is an extremely poor reflection upon this Labor government's environmental record if landholders are calling for an independent regulator to enforce standards because of Labor's failure to do so.

I have concerns that by creating this position of Rehabilitation Commissioner we are creating yet another layer of bureaucracy in this state. My colleague the member for Broadwater talked about the costs involved in setting up that position and the operation of that particular office. One would question why this role would not fall under the ambit of current departmental staff, as it has done, and why they could not be encouraged, permitted and authorised to do this same role.

The biggest issue arising from this bill is yet another illustration of the shambles that the Palaszczuk government is in. Let me be more specific. The amendment to clause 12 of the reef environmental authority is without doubt an absolute admission that this government has sold out

Queensland's primary producers. Despite now trying to appear to be the farmers' friend, this amendment fails to find the balance between one of Queensland's key industries and the natural jewel that is the Great Barrier Reef. Unlike Labor, the LNP knows that we do not have to choose one or the other. We can support local jobs and protect the reef, as was proven in the recent Senate inquiry. It is not just Queensland's hardworking primary producers who know this government has them in their sights and know that this government's legislation is an absolute failure. It is right there in the committee's recommendations that further information is needed—a committee, I might add, that is headed by one of their own.

The other thing that is illustrated by this legislation and the committee process is the fact that, despite the repeated claims of those opposite, Queensland's farmers are responsible guardians of our land. I note the Queensland Farmers' Federation and AgForce support this bill and I note that the Queensland Resources Council also supports the intent of the bill.

Whilst the LNP and Queensland's main industries support the effective rehabilitation of former resource sites and support both the agricultural industry and the reef, the Palaszczuk government has simply failed. Labor—and it is proven by this legislation—has failed to publish the guidelines when it comes to residual risks. Labor fails to provide the regulatory framework that will support job creation. They have failed to provide a definition that will allow industry to estimate the costs of this bill. They have failed to undertake a regulatory impact assessment in this case.

That is four notable failures by this government, but there are more to come. Every Queenslanders deserves to know that the Palaszczuk government has not only failed to consult properly on this legislation but also failed the moral test when they attempted to cover up their failure. Perhaps the most stunning failure of this government is yet another delegation of legislative functions to unelected bureaucrats. Again, Labor has failed to honour the basic tenets of democracy to this state. To allow them to absolve themselves of blame, Labor has failed to empower members of this House, elected by Queenslanders, to do their job—the job that we are paid to do and which we are elected to do. At a time when Queenslanders need leadership, they have failed to lead yet again.

I move on to the Biodiscovery and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As someone who has spent considerable time working with Indigenous communities, I welcome the acknowledgement of traditional knowledge held by Queensland's Indigenous people. Despite welcoming the intent, I must say that this legislation showcases even more Labor failures. Whilst Queensland's world-class researchers continue to impress, this government continues to fail. It is a sad day for our researchers, a sad day for Indigenous people and a sad day for Queensland as a whole when this government continues to fail on these important matters.

Whilst I will not be opposing these pieces of legislation before the chamber today, I do want to put on the record the need for this government to do better. Here we have an opportunity to recognise traditional knowledge, an opportunity to improve on Queensland's already world-class research and an opportunity to solve issues faced throughout the state, throughout Australia and throughout the world.

Queensland's resource workers, Queensland's primary producers and Queensland's Indigenous people deserve better. At a time when our state faces a monumental challenge, this government has been caught wanting—wanting to again defer the powers that are bestowed upon them by Queenslanders to unelected bureaucrats. I look forward to the minister clarifying the issues raised by the LNP today, but most of all I look forward to the day that Queensland's resource workers, Queensland's primary producers, Queensland's Indigenous people and Queenslanders as a whole elect a government that not only values the contribution of them all but also gets it right. That day is 31 October this year.