




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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AGRICULTURE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.40 pm): I too rise to make a contribution on the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I will first address a matter of great importance in my electorate of Southern Downs: the unlawful invasion of hardworking people's properties and businesses. We had the case of the Lemontree Feedlot, which is owned by the McNamee family. They live on-site and work very hard.

Mr McDonald: A good family.

Mr LISTER: They are a good family; I will take that interjection from the member from Lockyer. They are a great family who work very hard to feed us. They create employment and taxes to make our world a better place. They were subjected to an outrageous affront to their dignity and rights as landholders by a bunch of thugs who went onto their property, terrorised their family and rode roughshod over all of the biosecurity rules that they themselves are expected to uphold.

The Christensen family, who I know is a great dairy farming family at Freestone, was subjected to terrorism by vegan extremists who unlawfully wanted to impose their views on people who were going about their lawful business, and of course there was the miserable action taken against the Carey Bros Abattoir at Yangan. I have spoken to Greg Carey, I have met the McNamees and I have met the owners of the dairy, the Christensens. I have been to their places and seen what has happened, and what has happened is a disgrace. This bill, which the minister has waxed lyrical about in terms of providing additional penalties to curtail that kind of activity, is absolutely not on the right track.

The complaint raised by constituents of my electorate is that the same offenders go and do the same thing. They go to the Magistrate's Court and get hit with a wet lettuce leaf or maybe a fine—which is inevitably paid for by their benefactors or their puppetmasters in the radical movement—and then they go and stand on the front steps and rejoice publically in the leniency of the punishment they have been given. They say they are going to go out and do it again. It is quite clear that a simple summary offence—where a magistrate can hit them on the wrist, give them a fine which is of no deterrent value whatsoever and let them go without a conviction—just is not good enough. We need these outrageous acts of trespass and biosecurity threats to be made serious indictable offences. It is an insult to the hardworking owners of properties and businesses involved in animal production and processing.

This matter of a \$652 fine is laughable. I remember very well the invasion of the Carey Bros Abattoir, where the extremists involved stole three lambs and prevented processing. They attempted to injure the hardworking staff of Carey Bros Abattoir by putting ammonia about the place. In fact, two members of their staff had to go to hospital because of that. Just before that particular occasion, the minister proudly said—and I believe the Premier was quoted in the paper as saying—that there were going to be on-the-spot fines for these protesters. That just was not true, was it, because the regulation had not been passed. It was all about getting ahead of the curve and trying to show ordinary Queenslanders, who expect something to be done about this problem, that they were really doing something. But they are really going soft on those people, whose preferences they depend upon to

occupy the treasury benches. Everything this Labor government does about curtailing unlawful protest activity on farms is always half-hearted, and it is always manufactured in such a way as to enable the perpetrators to get away scot-free. I know that because I live in the electorate where these attacks have happened.

A committee went there to consider a bill and there was unanimous support for tougher penalties. We are talking about indictable offences, because that is where the true deterrent lies for people in these circumstances. If you want to have that dream job in the environment department or if you want to travel to Geneva and so forth, you cannot have a criminal record. These people rely on the fact that they are not going to be given a criminal record. They will be given a slap on the wrist so they can continue to do what they do. We need to see serious fines—not just for perpetrators on-site but for those who organise and encourage them. That is what the community expects. That is what the people of Southern Downs expect. I say that this bill is insultingly inadequate on that front.

This is yet another omnibus bill. An omnibus bill should be a rare occurrence, only used for efficiency purposes where it does not interrupt the scrutiny of the House. It is a great discourtesy to the elected members of this state to be confronted by omnibus bill after omnibus bill where we do not have an opportunity to thoroughly examine and criticise the contents of the bill.

While I am on the topic of the government's legislative program and the way they run things, in relation to the Paradise Dam amendments I heard the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy say, 'Our hands are tied. We can't do anything. We must act now.' Are we really to take the government's word on that?

Mr McDonald: A one-in-200-year flood.

Mr LISTER: A one-in-200-year flood. We in the LNP pushed for an open parliamentary inquiry into this. That is the proper forum for these matters, which are extremely important not just to those who depend on irrigation water from Paradise Dam in electorates like those of my honourable friends, the member for Burnett and the member for Bundaberg. This has statewide implications.

I was just perusing *Queensland Country Life* earlier on and I saw an excellent article by Mark Phelps about Paradise Dam. He said that the new laws come less than a week after an international dam engineering expert said there were good prospects for both making the dam safe and returning it to full capacity. Paul Rizzo said that not one dam of hundreds built in the same way around the world had ever been known to fail. The article continues—

Dr Rizzo also advised that no dam built the same way with any structural issues had been unable to be repaired and restored to full capacity.

You can take or leave what Dr Rizzo says, but I think when we have a divergent opinion to the one that is being advanced by the government it ought to be examined in an open, public fashion. We do not have all of the facts concerning the Paradise Dam debacle, and I can understand why: because it has the Labor Party's fingerprints all over it. This is a disgraceful low point in infrastructure in our state, yet every effort has been made to shield the debacle from public scrutiny. There is only one reason why that would happen: because it would be politically disadvantageous to the Labor Party. Let's just face that.

I will now move on to address the issue of the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges. What has happened here is that the program has been cut by Labor, the students have been sacked by Labor, and they are selling out the communities where these agricultural colleges are. When I look at the explanatory notes I see they say things like, 'The Queensland government's investment in VET in the region is to ensure students can access quality VET and employment opportunities without having to leave the region,' and it talks about 'a transition to more modern cost-effective training'. What does that mean?

I will tell you what it means in an electorate like Southern Downs, where many of my constituents are proud graduates of those colleges. It is a whole lot of soft soap and weasel words from a government that has turned its back on the bush. That is what it means. What has happened is a disgrace. These amendments, which the government obviously wanted to push through like a thief in the night, are designed to put the final nail into the coffin of agricultural colleges in this state. I would say to the minister that he ought to walk down the streets of country towns and ask people, 'What do you think we should do? Do you think we should close down the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges?' I know what the answer would be: a big fat no.

Mr Weir interjected.

Mr LISTER: Yes, I take the interjection from the member for Condamine. He knows better than anyone how the lack of consultation by this government feeds into the decisions they want to make.

This bill is in so many ways a virtuoso demonstration of the contempt this Labor government has for the people of the bush. Particularly in my seat of Southern Downs, the closure of agricultural colleges has been met with a great deal of sadness and in fact anger and dismay. Most importantly, the question of protecting hardworking landowners and farmers from invasions by protesters intent on imposing their way of life on other people is a very big issue.

This bill is yet another demonstration of how the Labor Party want to go soft on these types. They have the option to bring in serious indictable offences to make sure that those who do these things get slapped with a penalty that will really hurt and will act as a deterrent. The fact that we constantly go back to penalties which enable a magistrate to slap them on the wrist and let them off with a fine that someone else will pay so that they can go on the steps of the courthouse and rejoice in the slightness of their fines just does not cut it. We need a much tougher government. This Labor government has no credibility at all when it comes to protecting farmers in this and so many other ways.