



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (4.52 pm): It is fantastic to be back in this place today to outline some concerns about the environment, the Great Barrier Reef, science and youth areas after the estimates hearing late last year. I will start with the government's \$500 million Land Restoration Fund. Only one-fifth of the announced funding for this carbon-farming initiative has been allocated despite it being an election commitment from way back in 2017. The minister also confirmed at estimates that the green bond intended to pay for this has not even been issued yet. The only commitment of a time frame we could get from the minister to deliver this huge program was 'over a period of time'—astonishingly vague for something that is meant to be a flagship and for such a large amount of money.

Concerns have been raised about how difficult the LRF is to access, particularly the engagement process with landholders. We found out that those sessions cost over \$360,000 with around \$260,000 spent on consultants. I think it is clear there is not a great deal to show for that. Those issues need to be addressed or the most important people in making this work, regional Queenslanders, will not be on board and a key carbon capture initiative will not go anywhere near reaching its potential.

In fire management we saw through Service Delivery Statements 2-46 that the government did, in fact, reach and slightly exceed their target for planned burns to reduce fuel loads in Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service managed estate. This is a broad figure though, referred to regularly to seemingly make it appear as though adequate management is being undertaken. It is another example of the issues we have with the resourcing provided to manage our national parks. With over half of K'gari burnt to a crisp, it raises questions about this one in particular and how this precious UNESCO World Heritage site is overseen.

The review into the management of this large-scale destruction of almost 90,000 hectares of land on the island must be handed to the government by the end of March and we would expect it to be released shortly after by the responsible minister. The committee set up to advise the management of K'gari was disbanded in 2019 to be replaced by a single committee. That process began in November 2019, but we were told at estimates it has not been completed, with the department citing the impact of COVID-19 and the caretaker period. That is despite expressions of interest for membership and the chair position closing on 11 December 2019—before COVID-19. This needs to be sorted out.

At the 2020 election Labor committed to deliver a climate action plan 2020 to 2030 to sit alongside the Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017 to 2030 and the Climate Transition Strategy. Considering the former of those reports cost \$3 million to produce it was surprising to hear the minister commit to producing this new document internally within the department. I commend the government for what will surely be a first—putting together a strategic document without paying consultants to do it. There was not much clarity on the difference between this plan and the previous two. It raises questions about whether this is more virtue signalling rather than tangible action. If the minister has further information on the difference this new plan will provide, especially given it covers the same time frames as the others, I would be happy to see it.

On protected areas, the budget allocated \$28 million over four years, much less than the \$80 million committed by the LNP at last year's state election. Labor pledged to reach 17 per cent of Queensland's land area as an election commitment in 2017, but so far they are sitting at 8.24 per cent, an increase of not even half a per cent since the 2015 budget. In the next year their target is to increase this by just 0.1 per cent to 8.25 per cent, an incredibly disappointing lack of ambition.

I also asked the minister at estimates what Queensland's annual carbon emissions are. The latest data provided was from 2018 and the figure was 171 million tonnes of CO₂. I looked at the state greenhouse gas inventory where that figure came from to compare it with what Queensland's emissions were in 2015 when this government came to power. In 2015 that figure was around 152 million tonnes of CO₂, so under Labor Queensland's carbon emissions have increased. Labor has, in fact, overseen a 12½ per cent increase in Queensland's carbon emissions.

If we look at emissions reductions from 2005 to 2018, Queensland's emissions have decreased by the smallest amount of any state with the exception of WA, which saw an increase. That is in a time period when Labor have been in power for 10 of those 13 years. In those years we could not even begin to quantify the number of times that they have promoted their climate change credentials. They are not even one-third of the way towards delivering or achieving their 2030 target. It is one thing to have plans and targets, but they mean nothing if you do not achieve them. This lack of effective action to reduce our emissions and protect the unparalleled environment we have in Queensland, in particular our Great Barrier Reef, is extremely concerning.

It is clear that this is a government who always promote their environmental credentials, but it is all talk with little delivery.