




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2022

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION (REVERSAL OF GREAT BARRIER REEF PROTECTION MEASURES) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.30 pm): I rise to contribute to this debate. I would like to state at the outset that I very much support the shadow minister and the LNP's amendment to this bill. I have spoken many times in this House, outside of this House and all over the state on the Labor government's reef regulations and the impacts on the many primary producers in my electorate. When these laws were moved in the parliament in September 2019 the LNP proposed sensible amendments to introduce at least a 10-year grace period—it should be a lot longer—for the Burnett-Mary catchment area. This was rejected by Labor, even though a former Labor environment minister—I think it was Kate Jones—even proposed that it should not be in the legislation. Since then, I have been continuing to highlight this call, asking for the Labor government to remove the South Burnett and western Gympie regions from the reef regulations or delay their commencement.

Just over a year ago more than 200 primary producers from my region attended a public meeting in Kingaroy to understand the looming reef regulations and how they would affect and impact their business. The Kingaroy meeting had the biggest turnout across the state. Honourable members have to remember this was at the height of COVID. When everyone else was staying at home, these residents of mine were so concerned they came out in droves. There were 200 people who attended at the height of the pandemic to try to understand why they were being impacted—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for Nanango, just pause. Members, there is way too much background noise. If you need to have a chat please go outside.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:**—so severely by Labor's regulations in an area and in a part of Queensland that the science says does not go anywhere near the Great Barrier Reef. That is the impact on that greater South Burnett region. Above anything else the main question asked was why the South Burnett is even included in the legislation. Given that water from the South Burnett and the western Gympie regions would only ever reach the sea during times of extreme flood, the regulations that impact these farmers on a daily basis demonstrate that this one-size-fits-all regulation should not be imposed on that region.

Importantly, these meetings exposed the fact that there is no baseline data and no water quality testing is undertaken in the South Burnett. The only monitoring station is located at Mount Lawless, which is north-east of Gayndah and well downstream of the entire South Burnett and western Gympie regions. In June 2021 I asked a question on notice of the Minister for the Environment. The question was why are there no water quality monitoring or paddock monitoring programs in the South Burnett to advise what baseline data is available to determine whether the implementation of the cropping and horticultural standards in the South Burnett is of value to the improvement of water quality for the Great Barrier Reef. What a great question; I thought so. One would assume the Minister for the Environment would take notice and say, 'Okay. Let's have a look into that.'

The answer I received from the minister acknowledged that there was no upstream water quality monitoring prior to water entering the Burnett River. I highlighted for the minister that water from the Burnett catchment starts at the Bunya Mountains, some 215 kilometres by road and, therefore, an even further distance by the time it travels through our rivers and creeks to Mount Lawless, not to mention that much of our water sits in BP Dam, Gordonbrook Dam and Boondooma Dam before it even has a chance to enter the Burnett River. Let's not mention that after this it flows to where? The mighty Paradise Dam! It was the LNP that had to yell and scream to get that fixed. That is where it should sit for quite some time but currently it flows out to sea because it was the Palaszczuk government—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, hold on. Members, I am going to start warning people if the interjections keep up.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It was the LNP that saved Paradise Dam, and that is the water that flows from my mighty region. We saved Paradise Dam after the Labor government tore it down.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, I am going to issue a general warning to everyone. If there are any more of those interruptions I will warn people.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is my mighty area which I have just described that eventually flows down into Paradise Dam. I would say it goes out there a lot quicker now because the dam wall was ripped down by the Labor government, so it actually goes a bit further.

It is also acknowledged in the minister's response that the discharge of sediment from the Burnett River only occurs following flood conditions. This is something that our farmers and producers tried to explain to the departmental staff at the meetings. They know that during major flood in our region nothing will stop the flow of sediment. They also know that water moves laterally across the landscape and can deposit sediment in grass country, not just straight into our creeks. I asked another question of the minister, and that was about waving permit fees for producers in my region to address the negative mental health effects caused by the regulations and to offer them an incentive in good faith to become more engaged in the process. Unfortunately this was not considered. Meanwhile these regulations continue to have a serious effect on primary producers who are languishing under the pile of red tape that this Labor government has imposed on them.

I thank Mr Alan Broome and Mr and Mrs Peter and Margaret Hunt who made a submission to the committee on this bill. They spoke about the need for the South Burnett to be removed from these regulations. Alan, Peter and Margaret are all cattle producers who have land on Barker Creek and Reedy Creek. If water flows from their properties, it eventually runs into BP Dam. This water can sit for many years before a flood spills it into Barambah Creek. It seems wrong that these regulations are therefore being imposed on them. The question to rightfully ask is why.

The role of government should be to work alongside farmers and communities—unlike what they did in Paradise Dam—towards environmental outcomes instead of ramming unworkable laws down their throats. The LNP does believe that farmers and landholders are the true conservationists, the true champions for the land. They need to be viewed as genuine environmental partners. That is exactly what the LNP believes in. That is exactly why we on this side of the House will always stand up for farmers. We do not need to stand up in this House, like the agriculture minister does, and tell everyone that we are the supposed 'farmer's friend'. With the legislation that the Labor government has brought in, he is not the farmer's friend in any way, shape or form.

There is no doubt that the reef regulations brought in by Labor continue to cause farmers a great deal of distress largely because the government has created a perception.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I take that interjection because that member would not even know what graziers are. She would not even understand that these producers are hurting. These producers do not deserve the angst from the Labor government. They deserve to be treated with common decency. They deserve to be treated with respect, and it is only this side of the House that will do that for the primary producers of this great state.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Lytton will cease her interjections.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Let us come to the fake funding that this Palaszczuk government has done towards incentives for reef catchments. It has committed \$10 million. How much do members think that this government has expended? I will tell them—\$3,849 out of \$10 million. What sort of help

is that for the farmers in the reef catchments? How about it stands up for the farmers in the reef catchments and stops victimising them? How about the government makes sure and understands that there are more people in Queensland than the people who sit on these benches from South-East Queensland? That is exactly why the LNP will always stand up for our regional producers and will always stand up for regional development.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Lytton, I just warned you a minute ago. You are warned under the standing orders. Member for Cairns, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Nicklin, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I really do appreciate all of those warnings because it is obvious that we are getting under their skin because they know that they are all talk and no action, and we do not need to look any further than that \$10 million. When those opposite are out there doing their big press conferences and social media posts, they say that there is \$10 million to save the reef. What the heavens is \$3,000 going to do and what is it doing with the rest of it? Spending it on waste! That is exactly what this Palaszczuk government is doing. It does not look after the regions. It is only the LNP and this side of the House that will always stand up for regional Queensland for their rightful place in this state.