




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (6.48 pm): Firstly, I commend the member for Bonney on his foreshadowed amendments relating to best management practices. I believe that is the right way to go, because best management practices have not just happened; they have been around for over 20 years. I will give members a bit of a story. In 1996 the cotton industry had to face a big dilemma. There was a contamination of Endosulfan in beef to South Korea. We were at loggerheads with the beef industry. Beef and cotton were at loggerheads in Central Queensland over a contamination. We had to come together and fix it up. We could not just allow government to regulate; we needed to fix it up ourselves. The cotton industry has been part of a BMP process since 1996. I have been very involved in that and very proud of what the cotton industry has been able to establish. It is ISO 14000. It is the highest environmental standards. Because industry took control of its own destiny, it now has control of its own future. The cotton industry now has over 90 per cent—I think it is 95 per cent—of people under a BMP program. That goes from health and safety right through to chemical usage and the development of whole-of-farm practice. It has worked wonders.

In 2012, when the member for Glass House was the environment minister and John McVeigh was the minister for agriculture and the member for Toowoomba South, we embarked on introducing and implementing BMP grain and BMP cattle. That is working because industry knows how to protect its own industry. BMP is a program that agriculture can take a hold of and put in place to protect itself.

I do not want to be too critical, but over the last couple of years I think we have seen farmers demonised for political gain. That cannot be ignored. With regard to vegetation management, we had accusations from certain green groups and environmentalists that we were clearing 400 football fields of vegetation a day, which was absolute rubbish. The Herbarium said—and the committee I was on at the time heard from the Herbarium on this—that we have more vegetation growing in Queensland than we are clearing. We have to recognise that graziers and farmers are best environmentalists because they do not want to destroy their land.

I certainly understand where the Katter party are coming from. They feel the frustration. They see the problems and know how the agriculture industry is being demonised by certain groups. If the industry is going to survive and continue to grow, best management practices is the best program to follow. It is not just a program that has been thought about in the last two weeks or the last two years. It has been a program used in the cotton industry since 1996. It is a program that has been developed in the sugar industry, the cattle industry and the horticultural industry.

We do not want to use any more fertiliser or any more chemical than we have to. We are very efficient. We only need to look at the technology we have in the agriculture, farming and grazing industries today. Take the farming industry as an example. We have the technology that identifies a weed and only sprays that weed. We use 90 per cent less chemicals than we used before. That is an industry capable of regulating itself.

We want to protect the environment. We are the environmentalists on our land. The Great Barrier Reef is important and we understand that, but I do not think we need to be blamed for the issues on the Great Barrier Reef. There are a lot of issues with the Great Barrier Reef such as urban development and those sorts of things, but agriculture is being responsible and embracing best management practices. That is why I support the member for Bonney's amendments. If someone is part of a BMP program then they should be exempt from these regulations. It is as simple as that. They are taking control of their own industry.

I ask the Labor Party, the Katter party and the crossbenchers to join with us and make sure that we implement a BMP program. We had a BMP program from 2012 to 2015 and beyond that was working very well. We were allowing industry to take control of their own destiny.

**Mr Knuth** interjected.

**Mr MILLAR:** I take the interjection from the member for Hill. I have been involved in a BMP program for over 30 years and it absolutely works. Gaslighting, highlighting and scaring is not the way forward for agriculture. Industry wants to take control of its own destiny. Paul Schembri from Canegrowers said in an article in *Queensland Country Life* only a couple of weeks ago that BMP was the best way forward for industry. It is the same for the cotton industry and the cattle industry.

It might be great to sit there and say, 'We can just get rid of these regulations and that is it,' but what happens if something goes wrong? What happens if there is an issue of chemical contamination? It is not just one person who gets thrown under the bus; the whole industry gets thrown under the bus. It is like what happened with the cotton industry in 1996. There was contamination of beef going to South Korea and the industry was asked: does the industry have a social licence to continue? Does the industry have the ability to continue if it is going to contaminate our beef products into South Korea? The cotton industry stepped up and made significant changes. We allowed ourselves to have a BMP program that was recognised not only by government but also by the whole world.

Coca-Cola, McDonald's and other big corporates that take our product are now asking whether we are part of a program that tells them that we are sustainable and doing the right thing. They are dictating terms to us. We can sit there and say, 'We will throw it out,' but then we lose our markets. We have already seen massive problems when it comes to China—that is, where they have put massive tariffs on or rejected our wheat, barley or wine. We have to do everything right and we have to allow the industry to do it itself. We cannot let the government come in and regulate and dictate. We have to let industry be a part of that. We have to let the industry grow its confidence and do the right thing.

Talk to any cotton grower from Emerald down to Wee Waa and members will find that they are part of a BMP program and proud of it. It has made us better as agricultural people and has given us better yields. I remember in 1996 that our average yield for cotton was around 3.1 bales to the acre. It is now over 4.5 bales to the acre. With grains, and certainly with chickpeas and mung beans, we have massively increased our yields. BMP has played a significant role in that. It has played a role in increasing our yields.

Our beef industry is much better. I pay tribute to people like the late Xander McDonald. He was a fantastic bloke. I pay tribute to what he did in developing a sustainable beef industry. That is what we need. We have massive leaders in the beef industry. They are doing great things, getting better yields and better product and making us basically the cleanest, greenest and most sustainable agricultural export country in the world.

We have people in Japan who go straight to Obe beef in the Diamantina because of the sustainable and correct way we do things out there. Our cotton is sought after not only in Indonesia, Vietnam and South-East Asia but also in Europe. We have one of the best wool-growing industries in the world and it is sought after. I am looking forward to getting some support from the state government when we look to build the woolscour in Blackall. Some 87 per cent of our wool is scoured in China. If China says, 'We don't like you,' that is going to have a massive impact on our wool industry.

**Mr Nicholls:** You have said that already, I think.

**Mr MILLAR:** I think so. Get behind the wool industry. Get behind the member for Bonney's amendments around BMP. I think he has done a good job in putting a BMP program in place. I ask the Labor government to get behind the BMP program. Let the industry regulate itself and commit to that. I ask members to do that.