




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (4.46 pm): I rise to talk about the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is refreshing to hear a Labor member talk in a positive way about agriculture, unlike a lot of city Labor MPs. It is great to hear the member for Bundaberg praise his region and his agriculture. I am sure that the gentlemen and ladies from the bee industry sitting in the gallery did not come to hear the member for Bundaberg wax lyrical about what happens in his electorate. They came to hear about the changes this bill will make to our laws and to the way we keep bees in this state. In fact, there are a couple of other issues in this bill that the member for Bundaberg did not touch on, including the impersonation of parks officers in national parks. The government is tackling those issues.

I want to speak about the committee process and about bees. That is what this bill is mainly about. With regard to the way the committee process works, government members can wax lyrical about this being a bipartisan position or a decision of the committee to accept or pass a bill, but we all know that the committees are structured with three members of the Labor Party and three non-government members, with the casting vote going to the government chair. Of course, committee reports always deliver the outcome the government wants to achieve. That is how the system has been set up by this government, and it will never change while we have Labor in government.

There are some other very important items in the bill apart from issues around bees. I have spoken briefly about that, but I want to return to the main issue, which is the \$2.8 billion bee industry. The government has known since 2004 that this was a problem. What if we had left this until later in the year? In 2024, this \$2.8 billion bee industry could be collapsing. We could be having no macadamias, no avocados and no watermelons. The member for Ipswich mentioned a whole lot of things that we could be having none of if the bee industry started to collapse.

Although national parks have been mentioned a lot tonight this bill is actually about some national parks, and they are the national parks that were converted from state forests over the last 20 years. Beekeeping was allowed in those state forests—it is still allowed in state forests—but those state forests had their names changed to national parks and all of a sudden they became a sacred cow where you could not keep a little bee. The issue is that tonight this government wants to extend this for another 20 years. The argument that the shadow minister put forward that we take that date out and make this a perpetual situation makes a lot of sense. In fact, I would take it a step even further and say let us let bees into our national parks in total.

Before the minister starts spruiking wildly about national parks, the deputy director-general of national parks, Mr Klaassen, appeared before the committee and we asked him exactly why bees were being banned from national parks. He said that it was inconsistent with the management principles of national parks. We wanted to know why it was inconsistent with the management principles of national parks and he said that it was a policy position of the government. Our next question of course was, 'Let's find out from the government why they've chosen this as a policy position. Let's get the minister in here.' However, the leaders of the committee decided that we did not need to get the minister to appear before us and that it was all too hard. I would remind those opposite that when we were in

government from 2012 to 2015 plenty of ministers briefed committees. When we were in government ministers appeared before committees and explained their positions to committees, but we do not have any Labor ministers come along and explain their positions.

Tonight the minister told us that research was carried out in 2018, remembering of course that this situation started in 2004 and it is supposed to be banning bees from national parks in December 2024, 20 years later. In 2018 there was some research into what effects there are on national parks from bees and, heaven help us, there is no information. There is nothing—there is zero—that tells us that having bees in a national park is a problem. If the government thinks that this is inconsistent with the way to deal with a national park—to have a tiny little bee in there—then why has it not done the research to prove that? I think that is a very good question.

It has had 20 years to do the research to prove that those little bees cause a problem. It has had 20 years to search for other places where these bees could be kept, yet it has failed at that as well. Twenty years and the government cannot find anywhere else for these bees to go. What makes us think that in the next 20 years it will find somewhere for these bees to live, because it has not managed to find somewhere in the last 20 years and it sure as eggs—sure as bees—will not find any places to put them in the next 20 years? People in the bee industry have hunted around trying to find places to put their bees. They cannot find any. Why not just leave them alone and let them get on with their business?

People in the bee industry have had this hanging over their heads now for the last 20 years, and it has been accelerating. It was going to be a problem in 2024. These people are running a business. They need to borrow money and convince banks that they are a profitable business and they need to know that they have a place to put their bees. They need to buy their bees and they need to shift them from one place to another, or otherwise this \$2.8 billion industry is at risk of failure. We have put these people under a lot of stress because we have given them no certainty to move on.

We are now going to give them another 20 years of certainty, but I do not want to see these people back here again in 20 years fighting exactly the same fight over and over again. Let us give them this in perpetuity. Let us pass the amendment that the shadow minister is putting forward. We need to let this industry know that it has more than 20 years of a business to go. Let us not kill the \$2.8 billion worth of industry. Other states have managed to do this. Other states do not have a problem with having bees in national parks. I ask members to think for a second about bees in a state forest beside a national park. Bees do not go very far—I admit that—but who has told the bees that they cannot cross that fence into a national park, because they do not know that? They go in there; they come back out.

Really, for the sake of pollination of all of those products that we talked about before, this government is going to take an environmental stance against a little tiny bee. Let us give people in this industry the certainty that they need. Let us pass the shadow minister's sensible amendment. Let us get on with this and let us leave the bee industry alone.