




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 28 March 2023

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.56 pm): I rise to support the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Following the remarks of the member for Bonney and in drawing the attention of the House to the member for Broadwater and Leader of the Opposition's earlier comments in his contribution to the matters of public interest debate, the member for Bonney talked about consultation. I can assure the member for Bonney that there was zero consultation when those opposite sacked staff under the Newman government when the Leader of the Opposition sat around the cabinet table. Those opposite should not come into this place and pretend to talk about protecting the environment when they sacked staff under the Newman-Crisafulli government. The hypocrisy is breathtakingly amazing coming out of the mouth of the member for Bonney in pretending to care for the environment. You cannot lie straight in bed when your government sacked staff. That is disgraceful.

The main objective of the bill is to improve administrative efficiency and ensure regulatory frameworks within the environment portfolio remain contemporary, effective and responsive by amending the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to support industry, streamline and clarify regulatory processes, better protect the environment—that is what Labor governments do—and improve community input and transparency. The bill will also amend the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to make minor technical refinements related to administrative processes and interpretation, and it will amend the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 and the Land Title Act 1994 to better protect the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage area, improve user understanding, align with other legislation and contemporise drafting.

The Health and Environment Committee received 29 submissions to its inquiry. The committee's report on the bill was tabled on 25 November 2022 with a recommendation that the bill be passed. The committee did make a second recommendation that the minister respond to concerns raised by submitters about executive officer liability and adequacy of defences in section 493 of the Environmental Protection Act 1994. The government's response to the committee's report was tabled on 13 February this year and the government accepted the committee's recommendations. I note the minister's earlier contribution where she responded to the concerns raised about the executive officer liability provisions.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the committee for their work in contributing to the committee's report. I would also like to thank and acknowledge all those who made submissions and attended the committee's public hearings, including department representatives. These contributions help the committee do its work. Many valuable points were raised by all who participated. I would like to particularly thank our committee secretariat for their hard work.

This bill will support industry, it will better protect the environment and it will improve community input and transparency. Finally, it will provide for a stronger, more effective environmental regulator. The bill will ensure the state's environmental legislation remains up to date. Some submitters supported proposed amendments to the environmental impact statement process, which include to refuse an EIS process from proceeding if it is a clearly unacceptable project and for an EIS assessment report to lapse

after three years. Conversely, some submitters opposed aspects of the proposed changes. Amendments to require public notification of major amendment applications for environmental authorities for resource activities received strong support. Some issues were raised about most other proposed amendments and particularly in relation to changes to environmental authority, transitional environmental program and contaminated land provisions and the provisions to support the implementation of the Commonwealth Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management (Register) Act 2021 in Queensland.

The provisions in this bill will support industry by allowing a regulator to issue temporary authorities in an emergency situation, save time and money when going through an EIS process by ensuring there is power for obviously flawed EISs to be rejected at an early stage and provide for operators of non-resource activities to obtain a short-term environmental authority to trial new and innovative methods. The bill also provides for court orders to prohibit persistent offenders carrying out an activity and will allow criminal history reports to be sought, if required, to help protect the safety of the environmental regulator's staff when interacting with potential offenders.

In relation to consultation, it was incredibly disappointing to read that the opposition members on the committee used virtually their entire statement of reservation to the committee's report to whinge about the consultation process that happened before the bill even made it into this House. Whingeing and whining is the modus operandi of the LNP. Clearly the LNP did not want to talk about the substance of the bill. They do not believe in protecting the environment or, indeed, about toughening environmental laws so that offenders can be held accountable.

I draw to the attention of the House the Leader of the Opposition who today in his MPI contribution talked about protecting national parks. The blatant hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition has to be called out. The member for Broadwater was a government minister who sat at the cabinet table of the former LNP Newman government that sacked many parks and wildlife and department of environment staff. Those opposite come in here and talk about process rather than substance. It is such a lazy opposition. Not one environmental bill, member for Bonney, has been tabled in this House since you have been the shadow minister. I call that out. He is being paid extra to do the job, but what does he do with his time?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Lui): Member for Thuringowa, can I please bring you back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr HARPER:** According to AgForce—that great peak organisation representing Queensland rural producers—CEO Michael Guerin, the approach taken by the Department of Environment and Science to consultation was appropriate because of the highly complex nature of this law. Mr Guerin said, 'The whole area's one of the most sensitive but also most important to have in a rational and calm way'. The industry body said consultation was needed and it was entirely rational. Consultation started in August 2021. There was a discussion paper released in October 2021. A draft bill was released in early 2022. Changes were made to the bill in response to feedback from stakeholders. Then, of course, there was our parliamentary committee process where the whole community had a chance to have its say.

It is clear that there are elements of this bill that some stakeholders do not want. What is sad, however, is that rather than make their position clear, they instead attacked the process, a process that was extensive and went on for well over 12 months, member for Bonney, before the bill was finalised. Of course, the lazy LNP do not want to do any work themselves. They were just happy to jump on the bandwagon of some stakeholders and exploit the situation for their own political means, and they know how to do that very well. This bill will improve our environmental laws and lead to better and improved environmental outcomes. I commend the bill to the House.