




Speech By  
**Joseph Kelly**

**MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES**

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

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (12.26 pm): I support the bill. I would like to acknowledge and thank the minister and the committee for their hard work in relation to this. Listening to that contribution from the member for Maiwar and the various contributions from the LNP, I realise why there is a path right down the centre for the Labor Party and always will be. The litany of projects that the Greens listed that they would like to stop would render advancement and development in this state almost nil. If we cast our mind back to the mercifully short time that the LNP were in government in this state, they had an environment minister that the Brazilians would have been proud of with a tree-clearing record that I think Jair Bolsonaro would have given his left arm for. There will always be a path down the middle for sensible reforms in this area. I am proud to be on the same side as this minister who has delivered so much in this portfolio area.

I like to generally start thinking about these issues and these debates by having a look at the statement of reservation. It usually gives you a good basis to get into some sort of debating points, but unfortunately this statement of reservation says little, if anything. In fact, you have to read halfway through it until you finally get to the crux of the statement of so-called reservation where it says, 'The opposition members of the committee support the recommendations in this report.' It hardly sounds like a ringing statement of reservation. It seems to me like it is an exercise in opposition for opposition sake.

I would like to comment on the contribution of the member for Southport. The member for Southport said some things that I think have been reflected by a number of members over there. The notion around the divesting or the delegating of powers to public servants somehow rendering those powers and those public servants away from public accountability seems to me to be a gross misunderstanding of our Westminster system of governance. Of course public servants are accountable to the people of Queensland, just as we as members of this parliament are accountable to the people of Queensland.

The notion that, as governments of all persuasions, we do not always or regularly delegate and divest powers to public servants of all sorts at all levels is just false. It is just not true. In this particular instance—let's put aside the fact that we are divesting a procedural power that has never actually been used—it feeds into this notion that public servants cannot be trusted, that we do not like public servants and that public servants are fair game for politicians. No, the reality is public servants are hardworking, they execute their duties diligently and they are certainly accountable to the broader community, as anybody who has been around public servants or has been a public servant would know.

As I said, I am very proud to be part of this government. I think about the achievements of our government, most led by the minister to my left. There is the investment we put into the Great Barrier Reef, the largest ever investment in the history of Queensland into national parks and then there is the Containers for Change. When I go out on Clean Up Australia Day I do not see containers lying around anymore. Because of the plastic bag bans, our creeks are not choked with plastic bags—and we are

going further in that area. Then there was the waste levy, encouraging businesses to actually get into the circular economy rather than just dumping things. I have already touched on tree clearing, but there are our very strong laws in that areas as well as the doubling of the number of Indigenous land and sea rangers. Then we get to our Climate Action Plan including my favourite, which I know the Minister for Education is very fond of, the ACES program which has been rolled out right across the state and the very important Energy and Jobs Plan. All of these are significant environmental achievements. While this bill is perhaps not as headlining as some of those achievements, nonetheless it is still very important.

I will restrict myself to talking about a couple of things in relation to this bill. I think the early refusal provisions are important. Clearly, this bill is about improving efficiency, and this is a significant way that we can improve efficiency. I think it is important that decisions can be made earlier and perhaps give organisations and projects a chance to get back on track and move in a direction that has a better chance of achieving an outcome or abandoning a project at an earlier phase before too much investor money is put into it. In relation to the provisions around requiring public notification on all major amendments to environmental authorities, this is a really important step forward in terms of public accountability and transparency. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.