




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2023

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (12.11 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to thank my colleagues, in particular the committee and the chair, and the stakeholders for their contributions to the bill. As the minister for agriculture, I note many agriculture stakeholders made submissions to the committee, and I want to put on record and acknowledge those stakeholders—the Queensland Farmers' Federation, AgForce Queensland, the Australian Prawn Farmers Association, the Australian Barramundi Farmers Association and the LGAQ. I thank them for their contributions. I also want to commend the Minister for the Environment for her leadership on this bill and her consultation with those stakeholders. It was thorough consultation, and she listened concisely and took on board their concerns. I think this is an example of what you can do when you consult with industry.

It is interesting to follow the member for Gympie and to listen to his view on where aquaculture is heading. He needs to go through the Lobegeiger report and see the growth in aquaculture in this state. It was the Palaszczuk government that brought two major companies to Queensland, and I am referring to Tassal and Ornatas, and they are growing substantially. I know the member for Mackay and members in Townsville understand the growth of aquaculture in those areas. There are millions and millions of dollars worth of growth and hundreds of jobs in those areas supporting the aquaculture industry, yet those opposite produce this conspiracy theory that it is in demise. I am astounded by their contributions in respect of that part of the industry. They have little understanding of what this bill does.

The Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 sets the foundations to support industry, streamline administrative processes, protect the environment, enable community input, give transparency to the process and establish a more effective environmental regulator. The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993, and includes minor consequential amendments to the Land Title Act 1994.

There are several issues which concern the agricultural industry, but the amendments addressing emergency situations are of particular interest to me as an emergency situation includes disaster management and biosecurity emergency orders. The new emergency provisions assist Queensland businesses and individuals to meet environmental requirements in an emergency situation, such as flooding or biosecurity emergencies.

It is in times of emergency situations, such as floods, that there needs to be certainty for these people so they are not caught out by legislation in circumstances they cannot control. These provisions allow the administering authority to issue temporary authorities where it is deemed necessary and reasonable to respond to the impacts of an emergency situation, such as a natural disaster or major health or biosecurity emergencies. A person may apply to the administering authority for a temporary

authority which allows them to carry out an environmentally relevant activity on a temporary basis. I welcome this change as this will bring some peace of mind to those in emergency situations. I note the submission of the Queensland Farmers' Federation states—

QFF welcomes the transparency for numerous changes that will now allow the public to be notified of major changes to environmental approvals, especially those that can have a negative impact on agricultural land and regional communities.

I am sure this bill will go a long way to assist Queenslanders. This morning in a ministerial statement I spoke about a situation in the gulf. There is no doubt that these changes will assist in that process for further weather events down the track. I also note the committee's recommendations. The first is that the committee recommends that the bill be passed. The second is—

The committee recommends the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs take note of the committee's comments and, in her second reading speech, address the issues raised about the proposed amendment in clause 105 of the Bill and the adequacy of defences in section 493 of the Environmental Protection Act 1994.

On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.