




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (POWERS AND PENALTIES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (12.26 pm): I rise to speak on the Environmental Protection (Powers and Penalties) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. In doing so I would like to acknowledge the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Leanne Linard, committee chair, Aaron Harper, the members of the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee, committee secretariat and Hansard for their work in the examination of the bill. Queensland is a vast, beautiful state. Our greatest asset is our natural pristine environment. It is no secret that visitors come to our great state to see and experience the natural beauty that Queensland has to offer. I represent a vast electorate in Queensland—196,836 square kilometres to be exact. Cook is, hands down, the most beautiful electorate in Queensland, but I am a bit biased. We have the Great Barrier Reef at our doorstep and the only place in Queensland where the rainforest meets the reef. The Peninsula Developmental Road throughout Cape York allows visitors to access the many communities throughout the region. The most northern tip of Australia sits in Pajinka, the home of the Gudang Yahaykenu peoples. The Torres Strait Islands showcase the most beautiful, picturesque islands surrounded by turquoise coloured water.

The tourism industry thrives on our natural environment and we should not take this for granted. While I am proud of this government's work to preserve our natural environment, I am fully aware of the associated risk to the environment. While I acknowledge that the sealing of the PDR means access for my communities, it is also attracting a large number of people to the region every year. The large number of visitors to the region not only opens up the floodgates to the region but also the risk of environmental harm. Increased traffic on- and off-road means that there are major risks where we risk waste being disposed of and not monitored. This is not good for country. I acknowledge that society is always advancing and changing and that we need to make sure we are keeping up with societal change and demands.

As vast and beautiful as my electorate is, it is at risk of future environmental harm. Over the years, local government has expressed its concerns about not having adequate resources to manage and police waste effectively in the electorate. My electorate is so large that managing environmental waste has always been a difficult task and, if anything, has always been in the too-hard basket. The careless disposal of waste is bad not only for the environment but also for the natural biodiversity in Far North Queensland. In order to manage ongoing risk to the natural environment and biodiversity, we need ongoing environmental legislative reforms to protect our environment for the future. That is why I am proud to speak to this bill today. My priority is protecting our natural environment for the future.

The objective of the Environmental Protection (Powers and Penalties) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 is to ensure the powers and penalties in the Environmental Protection Act 1994 are contemporary and fit for purpose by facilitating a more proactive approach to environmental risk management with enhanced regulatory responses to manage and restore environmental harm which has occurred. The explanatory notes state that the bill's objectives will be achieved through clarifying and refining environmental policy principles; rationalising statutory notices to ensure compliance with

authorities, duties and obligations and to respond to environmental harm events; establishing a new duty to restore the environment and associating existing duties or obligations to offences; and improving evidentiary provisions relating to court proceeding.

The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to implement recommendations from retired judge Richard Jones and barrister Susan Hedge's 2022 report. I want to acknowledge the contributions by the member for Bundamba and the member for Ipswich and the environmental impact they have had to experience in their community. That is why I feel so passionate about this bill, because I want to prevent future environmental impact to my communities. The review aimed to identify whether the tools available under the EP Act, particularly in relation to environmental nuisance, are sufficiently contemporary to address current and future challenges and make any recommendations for improvement to better regulate Queensland's environment. I will end on that note.

I acknowledge that we are, as I mentioned, an advancing society. We are progressing towards development. I know that economic development is a huge priority for my electorate and creating opportunities that will bring visitors to our region. I talk about the tourism industry. It is certainly going to support long-term economic growth and development in the region. In saying that, I also acknowledge that our environment is our greatest asset, and we should be doing everything to protect our environment. I commend the bill to the House.