



Speech by

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (3.54 p.m.): I, too, rise to support the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, brought to the House by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Robertson. This bill, which has been described by the Australian Conservation Foundation as 'a giant leap forward for Queensland', is certainly one of the most significant and most important pieces of legislation with which I will be involved in my parliamentary career.

This bill will end broadscale land clearing in Queensland by the end of December 2006. Importantly, indeed critically, it will also improve the relationship between the government and individual land-holders on the management of individual properties through the introduction of property maps of assessable vegetation. The bill incorporates \$150 million of compensation for Queensland farmers.

Mr Johnson: You won't pay any compensation in the Murweh shire.

Ms NOLAN: This compensation package fills the gap and, indeed, very sadly has not been met by the member for Gregory's colleagues in the federal parliament who, despite the protestations of the National Party in this chamber, have absolutely refused to come to the party when it comes to compensating Queensland farmers. The federal government refused to come to the party in relation to the people it claims are its heart and soul, that is, the farmers of the rural areas of Queensland.

One only has to drive around western Queensland or get in a plane and fly over a part of that area to see the huge changes that have been made to the Australian landscape as a result of and since white settlement. While we did once in Australia see our landscape almost purely as a productive resource, we now understand much better the relationship between sustainable human life and the maintenance of our natural physical environment.

At the time the recent moratorium on broadscale land clearing in Queensland commenced, that practice was contributing 12 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Australia. As most people who have moved onto two legs understand, the greenhouse effect is one of the greatest threats to our continuing and sustainable life on this planet. This bill, by ending broadscale land clearing in Queensland, will deliver the single largest reduction in greenhouse gas emissions ever in Australia. In addition to the greenhouse impact, broadscale land clearing is the No. 1 cause of salinity, a threat to wildlife and a major cause of erosion.

Dealing with these environmental benefits really does speak for itself. The National Party and others have argued against this bill on the basis that it somehow removes what they see as people's inalienable right to broadscale land-clear on freehold land. The question of course is: does anyone really have the right to damage the environment in which we all live? The answer to that is absolutely no. While some people might scrape themselves up off the earth to argue that broadscale land clearing with bulldozers and chains somehow does not damage the environment, I think most of us understand that broadscale land clearing in Queensland is fundamentally damaging to the environment. Having a permit in your hand does not mean that those bulldozers and those chains are not damaging the environment. One would think that even the members of the National Party could get their little heads around that little fact.

There has been opposition to this bill on a range of levels. Most recently, Agforce, the farmers group, sought to exercise its democratic right to represent its constituents' issues. Sadly, however, it has run arguments about the need for further consultation and it has run arguments about specific technical details of the bill to cover up for what is in fact its fundamental philosophical opposition to the bill. We all

understand that this commitment was one of the major commitments of the Beattie Labor government in going to the last election. We all understand that, with the overwhelming majority this government won, there is a very clear mandate to bring forward the bill. Consultation, et cetera, will only serve to take away the choice that people have democratically made.

As I said earlier, the Howard government has wshed on an agreement to fund a part of the compensation for these farmers. The National Party has stood here over a couple of days now and argued that broadscale land clearing does not hurt the environment. The member for Hinchinbrook tried to say that trees were in fact causing the greenhouse effect in times of drought, which confounded me, I have to say. That these people can argue they are the defenders of rural Queensland when their own federal colleagues would have this bill go through with no compensation at all absolutely astonishes me.

This bill, with its environmental benefits and its comprehensive compensation package for farmers, really does speak for itself. It is a little ironic that this morning, in the condolence motion for Mr Charles Porter, the quotes that the Leader of the Opposition chose to use from Mr Porter were those that related to the need for political parties to change. Mr Springborg stood up here and said that that was the thing he had most admired in the late Mr Porter's contribution to public life over many decades. What he said was not that he admired Mr Porter's somewhat Right Wing perspective. What he said was that he admired the late Mr Porter's understanding that political parties have to change and that the issues change.

He used a quote about the era in which Mr Porter made his maiden speech being as different from that which had come before as the future would be from the time at which his maiden speech was made. It was a good quote. So how ironic it is that on the very day that Mr Springborg sought to say the thing that he admired about this man was his understanding that politics and people in politics have to change the National Party has spent all day arguing for the ideas of the past. I really think that position speaks for itself.

What we are seeing in here today is a bill that is absolutely fundamental for the continuation of sustainable human life and a sustainable economy in this state. What we have seen all day is the National Party trotting out a bunch of nonsensical, prehistoric, tired arguments about how things used to be and if only they were the same. Do National Party members like change or do they not? I think the answer to that is that they do not like change. They cannot change. They will not change. They have not changed and, as a result, like the dinosaurs they will wither away. I commend the bill to the House.