




Speech By  
**Jeff Seeney**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 July 2015

**STATE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS ORGANISATION AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (11.24 am): I was not going to make a contribution to this debate because I thought the subject was well and truly covered by the shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook. I congratulate him on the intellectual response that he has prepared to a bill before the House that is without any doubt another one of those payback bills that we see in this place after every election when the Labor Party are successful. They come in here and they pass pieces of legislation that do not stand up to logic, that do not stand up to the sort of intellectual rigour that the member for Hinchinbrook has applied to this bill, and they never intended to. They never intended to stand up to that sort of intellectual rigour because they are about election payback, and this one is certainly about election payback for the last election.

We have seen them before. There has been a whole string of them—the Wild Rivers Act, the Vegetation Management Act, and the wildlife protection act was another one I think. Over the years I have been here I have seen them all. After every election when the Labor Party win they come in here and they pay back the green movement, and that is what this is about.

I was inspired to make a contribution to this debate because of the gibberish rantings of the member for Mirani. I have to put on record some of the facts, because there were no facts in the address that was made by the member for Mirani. Unfortunately, my old mate the member for Mirani sees the world from a particular perspective, and I cannot let the record go uncorrected.

Can I say to the member for Mirani and every person who has any concern about the objection rights that anybody has to these projects that the reality is that there are a whole lot more opportunities to object now than there were when the member for Mirani was last in government. When the member for Mirani was last in government, he was an advocate for the mining industry—which was somewhat misplaced I think, but he had an interest in the mining industry. If he or anybody wants to look at the situation that exists now in comparison to the situation that existed then in relation to the opportunities that stakeholders—whoever they might be—have to object to any particular issue that might arise from the proposed establishment of a mine, there are much greater opportunities now than there were when the member for Mirani was last in government.

Let me go through the legislation that has been introduced since then that the member for Mirani seems completely unaware of. It is called the Regional Planning Interests Act. What it did was to take the situation where people had a right to have an input from the end of the process to the beginning of the process. So, rather than getting engaged in court battles and making lawyers and barristers very wealthy, the Regional Planning Interests Act provides a whole range of opportunities for people to have an input, to have their issues addressed at the beginning before the mine is established, before the lease is issued, before the environmental authority is considered. It is a planning process that did not exist, member for Mirani, when you were last here. There was no such thing. It did not exist.

Now those landholders that you stand up and purport to be concerned about have access to a planning process that people in urban areas have had access to for generations. So somebody in an urban area that is concerned about a development in their street has access to a whole range of opportunities to have an input. They have access to the Planning and Environment Court to have any of those decisions contested. But rural landholders never had that in the past; now they do.

**Mr Cripps:** And who gave it to them?

**Mr SEENEY:** It was not because of the Labor Party, member for Mirani, but because of us. We promised that we would do it before we came to government and we did it. We did it. We consulted with all of the stakeholders in the mining industry—stakeholders who had been at each other's throats for a long time. It was a degree of anger and disaffection unlike anything else I have ever seen in the Queensland community. We entered into a consultation process with all of those people. We brought all of those people together and agreed on a piece of legislation that provided those provisions. It provided opportunities for all of those people. Whether it is the people whom the member for Mirani purports to be concerned about or whether it is the Greens who are behind this particular bill, they are all involved. We had unanimous support for that legislation because it avoided conflict situations at the end of the process and it provided enormous opportunities for people to get involved at the beginning of the process which they did not have before.

The rantings of the member for Mirani that we heard this morning are complete and utter garbage. Rural landholders, in particular—the people whom I represent, the people whom I care about and the community that I come from—now have an opportunity that the Labor Party never gave them. In 14 years in government they never gave them that opportunity. They established the resources industry across areas of Queensland where the resources industry had never existed before, and they never gave those rural people the opportunity to have the input that they deserved. They never gave those rural people the opportunity to have the input that they have now after three years of LNP government.

I say to the member for Mirani that I am happy to take him through that legislation because I concede that, like all planning legislation, it is complex but it needs to be complex because the issues are complex. It needs to be complex so that all of those people have the opportunity to have their voices heard and to influence the decisions before they are made, not just object to them after they are made.

The other point that I want to deal with is the reason the Land Court does not have the ability to overturn a condition that is applied in an environmental authority by the Coordinator-General, because that is really what this is about. The member for Mirani indicated in some detail that the Land Court was advising us in government—

**Mr Cripps:** Hinchinbrook. I'm from Hinchinbrook.

**Mr SEENEY:** The member for Hinchinbrook, I am sorry. I have the member for Mirani on my brain. The member for Mirani is a vastly different politician. But there is a reason and, once again, it is about understanding the process. When an environmental impact study is conducted and the Coordinator-General considers that environmental impact study, it is a long and comprehensive process. In fact, the minimum is at least two years. Some of them take five years to go through that process. It is an incredibly comprehensive process and it provides opportunities for input. It provides a number of opportunities for input from all stakeholders. It provides opportunities for the consideration of expert advice from a whole range of different professional stakeholders, but it is an incredibly comprehensive process. When you get to the end of that process and the Coordinator-General applies some conditions, to suggest that those conditions could then be overturned by a Land Court hearing which would go for—the shadow Attorney-General would know—a week at the outside, I would suggest—

**Mr Walker:** Less than that.

**Mr SEENEY:** Less than that. The longest Land Court hearing would go for a week. Land Court hearings probably go for a lot shorter period of time than that. The Land Court would not claim to, and they do not claim to, have the expertise that is involved in the Coordinator-General's office in considering the outcomes of that long and comprehensive process that runs from three to five years. That is the reason that there is no provision for the Land Court to overturn those conditions that the Coordinator-General might apply to an environmental authority. And it has never been there, a point made by the member for Mirani. The provision has never before there for the Land Court to overturn the conditions that result from that long and comprehensive process. Nobody in the Land Court has ever suggested that they should have.

**Mr Nicholls:** Hinchinbrook.

**Mr SEENEY:** Member for Hinchinbrook, I apologise. Nobody in the Land Court has ever suggested that they should have. What members of the Land Court suggested to us as the government was that it was pointless having an opportunity to lodge an objection to those conditions because they did not have the ability to overturn those conditions and they should not have the ability to overturn those conditions. The poor old minister has been sent in here today with a piece of legislation—

**An opposition member:** At Jackie's bidding.

**Mr SEENEY:** Yes, at the behest of the Socialist Left, at the behest of the crazy loonies on the Left, he has been sent in here today with a piece of legislation that is all about philosophical payback. It will not do anything to provide objection rights to people that are effective or that can achieve anything. We did that in the Regional Planning Interests Act. We provided them with an avenue that was effective and that enabled them to have an influence on decisions before they were made, not fight about it in court after they were made.

The people at whose behest the minister is acting in introducing this legislation today are all about delay. They are all about using this provision to further delay these projects. They are not about getting a resolution. They are not about finding a consensus position. They do not have any concern for the Queensland economy or for the jobs of people in places like Acland. They just want another opportunity to delay the process. That is all this does. It does not provide any opportunity to make the outcome better. I say to the minister that he should think carefully about that. This is just about delaying the process. It is not about making the outcome better.

If you want to make the outcome better, then point out to the stakeholders the provisions that now exist in the Regional Planning Interests Act. Point out to the stakeholders the opportunities they have in the consideration of the regional development authority that is necessary under that act. Point out to the stakeholders the opportunities they have to participate in the comprehensive environmental impact study process that the Coordinator-General undertakes. Point out to the stakeholders the opportunities they have to participate in the process around the issuance of the mining lease.

When you get right to the end of the process and the environmental authority that the Coordinator-General has issued is then objected to in the Land Court, which cannot overturn that condition, it is a nonsense. It is a complete and utter nonsense to suggest that you are doing anything to enhance the process or to provide greater opportunities for people. What you are doing is enabling these anti everything groups to frustrate the economic development that Queenslanders need, to take away the job opportunities that people in Queensland need and to take away the economic returns that this state needs to bolster the budget of your colleague the Premier.

I say to the minister: be aware of what you are doing. Do not come in here and sprout the sort of nonsense that I heard you deliver to this House in the second reading speech because I think you are better than that. I think this issue deserves better examination than that. This parliament deserves to look at these issues in a much more comprehensive, professional and intellectual way than what we have seen from this minister and this government until now.

This particular bill, I am told, was instigated by the proposal to expand the Acland coalmine in Toowoomba. I want to say a couple of things about that, once again motivated by the member for Mirani. There is a lot of discussion in the resources industry about rehabilitation. When you travel around the resources industry in Queensland, there are good examples of rehabilitation and there are not so good examples of rehabilitation. If anybody wants to have a look at what can be achieved in the area of rehabilitation, the one place you need to go and look is Acland. It is the best example of rehabilitation that you will see anywhere.

I wish that every mine in Queensland was able to have the same outcome from their rehabilitation efforts as the Acland mine has been able to achieve. It is an incredible example of what can be achieved, but it is what the industry should aspire to. It is what all of the mines across Central Queensland should aspire to, but they do not. To suggest that Acland is the reason for this is once again completely misunderstanding the situation that exists at Acland. They are industry leaders in terms of returning the land that they mine to a productive state. They are an operation that has almost unanimous local support. I have spent a lot of time there with the local community. I know there are a small number of people who are passionately opposed, but they have almost unanimous support amongst the local community. They are industry leaders in the area of rehabilitation. They have gone through a number of different application processes to reduce the size of their initial application down to a much smaller footprint to avoid sensitive areas and to ensure they are able to maintain that community support.

So it is a complete and utter nonsense to suggest that this bill is needed because of the proposed Acland development. It is simply another one of those green payback bills that gives an opportunity for all of the antimining groups to vent their spleen. We have seen it today with the member for Mirani, and no doubt we will see it from organisations like the Environmental Defenders Office and the World Wildlife Fund. It is important, however, that this House knows the facts when it considers this legislation, and I am happy to put the facts on the record today.