




Speech By  
**Jeff Seeneey**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

## **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL, REPORTING DATE**

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (10.06 pm): I rise with a heavy heart to make a contribution to the debate in the parliament tonight. I have to confess that I feel sick to the bottom of my stomach because I have seen this type of legislation introduced into this parliament now for 15 years and every time that it is introduced into this parliament it creates an emotional backlash from a significant part of the population of Queensland. It does that because it has a significant effect on a major part of the population of Queensland. The motion that we are debating tonight is about how long this parliament is going to give those people who are going to be affected, those Queenslanders who tonight will feel as I do—sick to the bottom of my stomach—the opportunity to communicate the effect on them to these people over here who are making the laws without any knowledge, any understanding or even any care for how those people are going to be affected.

This vegetation management legislation was introduced in this parliament first in 1999 and there has been amendment after amendment after amendment. Every time it has been amended there has been a reaction from the community that is affected.

**Ms Trad:** It's called panic clearing.

**Mr SPEAKER:** You have the call, member for Callide. If you have finished your contribution you are entitled to resume your seat.

**Mr SEENEY:** I am not finished, Mr Speaker. I am not finished at all because this is a very significant issue and it does not deserve the sort of belittling, the sort of nonsense comments that we just heard from the Deputy Premier. It does not deserve that sort of attitude. It does not deserve that sort of flippancy, yet that is what has happened. Every time this has been amended it has been amended because of the Green preference deals that have been done by the Deputy Premier and her political comrades. Every election, as the member for Hinchinbrook said, that Labor has won we come in here and the Labor government pays the piper. They amend this legislation to pay off the preference deal that was important to them for that particular election campaign.

The legislation before the House tonight is exactly that: it is a political pay-off for the Deputy Premier and no doubt she can be flippant and dismissive as she just was about the legislation before the House, but my constituents cannot. My constituents cannot be dismissive and certainly they will not be flippant when they hear about this.

**Ms Jones:** You have already jumped ship.

**Mr SEENEY:** I take the interjection from the member for Ashgrove. I assure the member for Ashgrove that I will not be going anywhere. I will be here to fight this legislation, just as I have fought it since 1999, because, as the member for Dalrymple said, I do not give up on my landholders. Every single landholder in my electorate will be affected.

**Ms Jones** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Minister for Education, I urge you to not make irrelevant and provocative interjections, otherwise you will be warned under standing order 253A.

**Mr SEENEY:** I say to the member for Ashgrove that she was quite wrong in her contribution to this House and that is the very reason why there should be more than four weeks for this parliament to consider the legislation. She was totally wrong. Every landholder in my electorate will be restricted and will suffer a loss of property rights that they have never suffered before, because this legislation goes further than anything that previous Labor governments have introduced into this House, specifically with the extension of the category R restrictions to the Fitzroy and Burnett catchments. It is easy for those people to write those two catchments into the legislation without realising the extent of that. It means that every landholder in my electorate, most of the electorate of the member for Nanango, a fair part of the electorate of the member for Gregory, a big chunk of the electorate of the member for Mirani and a whole range of others—

**Mr Perrett:** And Gympie, the Mary Valley, the Mary River.

**Mr SEENEY:** And the Mary River, I thank the member for Gympie. Every landholder will be subject to restrictions on what is termed, in the quick reading that I have had, 'watercourses and drainage lines'. That is a profound effect on thousands of landholders.

**Mr Cripps:** For the first time.

**Mr SEENEY:** For the first time. It has never been done before in any legislation. I will ask the parliamentary library to do a search, but I reckon we have had 12 or 15 attempts at amending this legislation and this is the first time that those thousands of landholders will be so affected. Therefore, I can assure the member for Ashgrove that I will be here to defend those landholders. I will be here to fight this legislation, just I have fought it since 1999. Irrespective of whether you force it through this House in four weeks or if it takes four months or four years, we will restore some justice to those landholders.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Callide, I intend to issue similar warnings to you as I did to the previous speaker. I urge you to make your comments relevant to the amendment before the House.

**Mr SEENEY:** Absolutely. The amendment before the House seeks to provide a longer period for those people who are injuriously affected by legislation to, first of all, understand what that effect is—because on my first reading of the legislation I cannot understand what it means—and then to be able to put forward to members of this House as legislators a case about how the legislation affects them. They cannot do that in four weeks. We are talking about thousands of landholders who, for the first time, have to come to grips with this particular restriction. I am only using one example of the restrictions that are placed on category R watercourses and drainage lines. That is just one that I have picked out of the legislation. Those people need a lot longer than four weeks. The members of the committee need a lot longer than four weeks to determine what will be the effects of this legislation and to make a sensible recommendation to the parliament about what we should do when we come to consider the legislation.

By coming in here and suggesting a four-week period for consideration by the committee, the minister is taking the outcome for granted. It is taking the outcome of the committee for granted. It is taking the outcome of this parliament for granted. It is taking the vote of every member in this parliament for granted, because they think that they can storm this legislation through, just as they have done in the previous 12 or 15 iterations in this House.

The other comments that I want to make are in regard to the committee process. I was one of a group of members of this House who set up the committee system. We set up the committees as a mechanism in this parliament to make sure that legislation was properly considered and that complex legislation was not passed in this parliament without the parliament fully understanding the complexity of it. I can tell the House that one of the examples that was used in the discussions of members on that committee was the original vegetation management legislation that was introduced into this place in 1999. Members such as the former member for Rockhampton, Robbie Schwarten, and former leader of the House Judy Spence sat on that committee. They agreed with us that that legislation was a great example of legislation that would have been much better had it been subjected to a committee process that allowed the stakeholders, the people impacted by the legislation, to have full and ample opportunity to advise the legislators of its effects. That is exactly what we are looking for tonight. That is exactly what the amendment that has been moved by the member for Mermaid Beach is calling for. It is calling for the committee to have a full opportunity to hear from the people who will be affected by the legislation.

My point is that that was the very purpose of the committee system. That is the reason it was put in place. That is the reason there was bipartisan agreement from a group of senior members of this parliament who put the committee system in place. It was not meant to be some sort of a rubber-stamp mechanism where legislation could be introduced here, rushed off to the committee, jammed through the committee and brought back here, to give it some sort of legitimacy. That was never the case. The vegetation management legislation was one of the key pieces of legislation that was used as an example and as a template for the research that we did on how legislation should be treated through this House.

This House should give the time. The committee needs the time. The landholders across Queensland need the time. My constituents need the time to be able to, first of all, understand what it means and, secondly, have the opportunity that this parliament set out to give them when we set up the committee system.

This is an emotive piece of legislation. It has been an emotive piece of legislation since it was introduced in 1999. It is emotive every time that an amendment bill is introduced into this House, but it is that way for a reason. It is emotive because of the impacts that it has. It is emotive because of the effects it has. For these people over here, it is not. They sit over in the West End cafes and they theorise about these things, but it is an academic argument for them. However, for the people who are affected, it is their livelihood. This is their life. It is their superannuation. It is their living. It is their business and these people steal away the worth of that business. They steal away the worth of that business every time they amend this legislation. They steal away the property rights. They steal away the capacity of those people to use the asset that they have bought and paid for, so there will be an emotive reaction. A whole range of Queensland landholders feel as I do tonight, and they deserve the chance to avail themselves of the opportunity that this parliament provided for them when we set up the committee system.

To do that, the committee needs time. It needs time to hear from all of those Queensland landholders. It needs time for those people to be able to fully explain the unfair impacts that this legislation will have upon them. To ensure that that happens, this House should support the amendment that has been moved by the member for Mermaid Beach.