




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR THEODORE

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (2.26 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate today on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. At the outset I want to thank the opposition committee members for their due diligence on this very important piece of legislation that affects a massive proportion of Queensland. The amount of work that the opposition members put into the dissenting report was quite phenomenal. I congratulate them on their hard-earned work in representing the interests of the farmers—the people who look after this state, who look after the farming communities and who look after the land in this state. Those individuals are the cornerstone of the history of this wonderful place we call Queensland. If we look at the coat of arms up there just above the Deputy Speaker's head, we will see the heads of a bull and a ram, a sheaf of wheat and sugar cane.

Mr Costigan: You don't see NASA.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I take that interjection. You do not see NASA up there. Agriculture is the cornerstone of our state and always has been. Those opposite will persecute the farmers for their own political ideology to look after the Greens voters out there to ensure that they stay in their seats. Yesterday farmers came to Brisbane to exercise their democratic right to protest against this unfair legislation. I listened to their stories and saw young families, the next generation of farmers who will be directly affected by this legislation, who were so passionate about their future and about their rights. The last thing anybody in South-East Queensland would like is somebody coming on to their property and telling them, 'You cannot do this. You cannot do that.'

Mr Costigan: I wonder how that would go down.

An opposition member: Especially when you make an income out of it.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I take that interjection. Those opposite seem to forget the export dollars we receive from farming industries. They seem to forget that that is one of the main powerhouses of our economy. We are feeding other nations around the world because our farming practices are seen as clean and green. A few decades ago the Theodore electorate was populated with dairy farms, orchards and other farms. Mr Deputy Speaker Stewart, you would know that too. You would have driven around over the years and you would have seen the massive amount of development—

Mr Minnikin: The Albert shire.

Mr BOOTHMAN:—in the old Albert shire that has slowly encroached on those farming lands. I found what Rachel Mackenzie from Growcom said very interesting. She stated that we have lost something like 5,700 hectares of land per year to urbanisation since 1999. Nowhere is this more evident than on the northern Gold Coast.

Let us talk about how farmers look after their land, because this is their income source. Calopo is an introduced weed. It is a very aggressive vine. When it gets into an orchard—let us say an avocado orchard—those vines will overtake that orchard within weeks. They literally suffocate the tree with

foliage. The problem for the farmer—using the example of avocados—when the farmer is trying to remove those vines is that he rips away his fruit also because those vines envelop everything on those trees and they are so invasive.

There has been discussion about the protection of watercourses, water management, soil run-off and pollution. Let us use Moreton Bay as an example. There are so many invasive weeds along the Coomera River. There are weeds like the castor oil plant and elephant grass. I will tell the House a little bit about elephant grass, because this is something that my local residents commonly bring up. Every time we get a flood, elephant grass rips the riverbanks away. All the soil and nutrients go straight into Moreton Bay. Elephant grass affects other parts of Queensland too. Elephant grass is designed to rip itself away because that is how it repopulates further down the river. These types of weeds—the castor oil plant and elephant grass—literally smother all the native vegetation in an area. Native vegetation does not have a chance.

If you go further up the river where farming practices are established, the land producers are doing something about it but the further south you go down the river they are not. Farmers are actively trying to look after and manage their own land. There is no better example than the Coomera River. We have other introduced species throughout these areas such as lantana and wild tobacco, which can be found near John Muntz Bridge especially. It is all over the place. Does the government do anything about it? It is on council land but do they do anything about it? No, it just sits there, and every time we get a flood we have enormous amounts of erosion because it is killing the native vegetation underneath it. It is stopping the native trees from coming up.

The people of Brisbane and the Gold Coast have to realise that the best custodians of the land are farmers. They are the people who know how to manage it. They are the individuals who do the right thing by the land, because the last thing they want is their main income-producing asset to be damaged. That is their livelihood. I say to members opposite: if they lock up all these areas they will become a haven for weeds and feral animals and, unfortunately, that means that biodiversity suffers even further. Those opposite have talked about the science and other so-called information, but as someone who has a bit of experience on properties I can say that the farmer is not the enemy of the environment.

Mr Costigan: He is a friend.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I take that interjection. They are friends of the environment, so please give them a fair go. That is all they are asking for. All those people who were out there protesting yesterday were asking for was a fair go. I will end my contribution with that: give them a fair go.