



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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VOLUNTARY CARBON CREDIT TRADING

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (12.09 am): On Wednesday evening I made a contribution to the debate on the private member's Voluntary Carbon Credit Trading Bill 2007 which was unfortunately defeated by the Beattie government. My allotted time expired before I was able to complete my remarks in relation to a few important issues in the bill. I would like to do that tonight.

As I was saying on Wednesday night, like any form of vegetation, sugar cane locks up carbon in its biomass. The significant advantage that makes sugar cane competitive as an efficient crop as far as relative energy inputs and greenhouse gas emissions are concerned includes the fact that bagasse, a by-product of sugar production, is available as a fuel for the generation of energy. In fact, many cogeneration projects are currently undertaken by a number of sugar milling companies.

Sugar cane in these mills requires virtually no input of fossil fuel energy for processing. The paper that I referred to on Wednesday night actually assesses a raw tonne of cane sugar as creating an energy credit at the end of its production life cycle. I wanted to canvass that because I think it is important to remember that there are alternatives to plantation forestry which have the capacity to contribute positively to carbon sequestration efforts. The advantage of sugar cane is that it continues to maintain a productive crop that provides jobs and incomes for families in the sugar industry and in the growing, harvesting and milling sectors. Importantly, these jobs are in regional and rural areas of Queensland. I also want to canvass this issue because, increasingly, there is pressure on the sugar industry in relation to land use in regional and rural areas because plantation forestry is looking to gain a foothold and expand its estate.

In my electorate, managed investment fund companies, full to the brim with superannuation money, and the government owned corporation Forestry Plantations Queensland are aggressively buying up land to establish plantation forestry. The sugar industry is worried about its ongoing viability if it continues to lose land to trees as it undermines the size of the harvest, which has implications for all three sectors of the industry in the long term—the growers, the harvester operators and the milling companies.

Certainly, I am not opposed to the development of a commercial timber industry. However, in both circumstances the land being targeted in many cases is good quality agricultural land, already cleared and drained for farming. As far as the bill was concerned, it would have been important that any carbon trading scheme recognised crops like sugar cane as having the potential to contribute positively to carbon sequestration efforts and that the sugar cane delivers a net carbon emission credit at the end of its production cycle.

I certainly think that the bill did that through the three methods by which the exchange would have provided certification on a voluntary basis to corporations and enterprises which reduce carbon emissions. Those efforts, as I mentioned last night, included sequestration, power produced from low or zero carbon emission industries and where traditional power sources can demonstrate that per unit emissions are reduced by an amount exceeding any reductions achieved by the industry as a whole.

The sugar industry meets those criteria and I believe has the capacity to make a very significant contribution to the sequestration of carbon. As such, I was pleased that the Queensland coalition provided the state with the opportunity to move forward but was ultimately disappointed that the Beattie government decided to defeat the bill for base political purposes.