



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 26 May 2011

GREAT BARRIER REEF

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (5.27 pm): In her answer to two recent questions on notice, the Minister for Environment and Resource Management refused to reveal to me the cost of establishing and monitoring the Bligh Labor government's so-called reef run-off regulations. The minister has since been forced to reveal that \$25 million has been spent on rolling out this bureaucratic nightmare. It is a scandal that the activities of farmers and graziers in North Queensland are regulated under the same act that regulates the activities of sewage treatment plants and heavy metal refineries.

The Bligh Labor government swore black and blue that more red tape in the form of big-stick regulations was the only way to save the Great Barrier Reef. The government has made unfounded accusations and slandered the reputations of North Queensland farmers and graziers about their land management practices. This politically driven policy has hurt farmers and graziers in North Queensland, who are now forced to develop and submit costly and complex environmental risk management plans to DERM.

Can members imagine what could have been achieved if, instead of spending \$25 million forcing farmers to comply with regulation, the Bligh government had funded an additional round of the federal government's voluntary incentive based reef rescue package? That program has been so successful that it has been consistently oversubscribed to by primary producers in the three rounds already delivered, such is the enthusiasm amongst landowners to ensure that their land management practices are modern and progressive.

The Bligh Labor government's obsession with regulation and its dependence on a preference deal with the Greens at the last election stood in the way of an opportunity to promote and achieve real outcomes in partnership with cane growers and beef producers. Instead, North Queensland farmers and graziers have spent valuable time and money filling out paperwork to satisfy useless, unproductive regulations, and that is a complete disgrace. Few people realise that the regulations imposed on cane farmers and beef producers in North Queensland involved the threat of massive fines and even jail terms. No fair-minded Queenslanders think that North Queensland farmers and graziers should be treated like criminals.

The sugar and pastoral industries underpin the economies and sustain the employment of many families in many communities across North Queensland and yet the Bligh government has targeted them using selective science and manipulating the available data. I have fought passionately against these so-called reef run-off regulations, not only because the basis of Labor's policy is fraudulent and fabricated but also because they strike at the heart of the industries that support communities in North Queensland in the Mackay, Whitsunday, Burdekin and Wet Tropics catchments. Regional Queensland, and particularly agriculture, is being targeted by the Bligh Labor government, and regional Queensland deserves better.