

POLICY GRAB

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From the Editor

Policy Grab aims to be a source for quality policy discussion between all LNP members and volunteer members of expert committees through the Policy Standing Committee – raising topics to share with friends and colleagues over coffee and inviting response.

The LNP's sensible environmental credentials are demonstrated by the Sustainable Queensland expert committees under the leadership of Rod Bligh, who have contributed to this edition on the Environment:

- **Can a conservative be a conservationist?** (*Dr Michael Duggan*)
- **Targeting renewable energy in Queensland** (*Rod Bligh & Roger du Blet*)
- **Chain of Responsibility Bill** (*Author's name withheld*)
- **The Great Barrier Reef and Vegetation Management** (*Lloyd Taylor*)
- **Impact of property heritage listing** (*Michael Marshall*)

Humour, often missing amongst the fundamentalist left, keeps tough issues in perspective. For our cartoons we are grateful to Richard Williams, Chair of the PSC, for entertaining us with his astute insight and creativity. Chairs of other expert committees are invited to nominate their area of interest for future issues. Comments, letters and articles may be sent to: dialogue@lnp.org.au

Can a conservative be a conservationist?

Dr Michael Duggan, Deputy Chair Environment and Heritage Protection Policy Committee

Preservation of Australia's natural beauty and the environment for future generations is a highly held tenet of our party platform, embodying a shared responsibility for environmental health for the mutual benefit of all and engaging with Queenslanders to raise awareness and protection of our natural biodiversity. John Howard demonstrated the party's environmental values when he introduced Australia's most progressive environmental and biodiversity legislation, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, in 1999.

What is less well known is that conservatives' understanding of markets and property rights produce better ways of improving the environment without the unnecessary costs that typify proposals from many environmental organisations and socialist politicians.

We show concern that some ill-conceived forms of protection unnecessarily threaten the jobs and health of ordinary Australians without any appreciable benefit to the environment or society. Yet it is a challenge to differentiate our conservative conservationist agenda from the environmentalists of the Left. Whilst environmental objectives may be agreed, the LNP can differentiate policy on the means to achieve them: fewer job losses and least intrusion into the lives of Australians.

It's time we became smarter at communicating our strategy and engaged more effectively with party membership and the general public on environment and conservation issues. After all, the LNP is the party that has conservation of resources of all kinds as a central tenet - whether economic or natural.



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Targeting renewable energy in Queensland

Rod Bligh and Roger du Blet

The drive for 'lower CO2 emissions' is changing the energy market, adding to the fundamental tenets of affordability and reliability of electricity generation and supply.

Queensland's draft report from the Renewable Energy Expert Panel (REEP) *Credible Pathways to a 50% renewable energy target for Queensland*, nominates three alternative pathways to increase renewable energy output from 5% to 50% by 2030. The REEP claim of 'cost neutrality' for electricity consumers is at odds with federal DEE modelling which predicts a cost of \$27b. It is contingent on factors which are used to enable the politically convenient claim, including:

- Lower output from existing coal and gas generators which are required to maintain operation with reduced government yield
- Increasing roof top PV solar from 1.5GW by 3GW under current market settings
- Pro-rata share of large scale renewable projects throughout Australia which are supported by the Renewable Energy Target (RET)
- Exclusion of costs which are driven by national emissions reduction schemes
- No viable proposal to maintain existing generation mechanisms while allowing renewable generation to increase naturally in the market without subsidies.

The LNP is in a strong position to take leadership around the structural changes that are occurring in the energy market. Our Federal counterparts have already set an ambitious target of 23.5% renewable energy by 2020 and there is a growing realization that success of the transition will depend on a coordinated national approach to the national energy market and infrastructure. Recent advances in national gas market reform to keep gas prices competitive is an example of an initiative that will enable lower emissions and electricity prices without fixation on state based renewable targets.



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The Great Barrier Reef and Vegetation Management

Lloyd Taylor

Successive Queensland and Australian Governments have committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef. UNESCO and the rest of the world want to conserve 'one of the seven natural wonders of the world' for future generations.

At dispute are the methods for conservation. Emotion, ideology, poor geography and political advantage drive the Greens, ALP and sympathetic media. By contrast, the LNP leans towards evidence-based policies underpinned by party values for: (g) *a sustainable environment balancing the need to be productive while preserving our natural assets to be enjoyed by future generations!*

The ALP's state-wide vegetation management legislation attempts to link tree clearing throughout the State with increased greenhouse gas emissions causing coral bleaching and damage to the GBR as the only way to reduce sediment and nutrients flowing into the GBR lagoon east of the Great Dividing Range. Scientific research indicates impacts on reef health differ markedly depending on the catchment zone: suspended sediment from the Fitzroy system causes greatest reef damage, while nitrogen is the major issue for catchments such as the Burdekin and Herbert. Each of these issues requires very different and specific interventions far removed from the blanket banning of tree clearing.

Rivers west of the Great Divide, flowing west and south across broad scale farming and grazing land, have no impact on the GBR. In these areas the ability to control regrowth and to remove trees is essential to enhance the economic viability of agricultural enterprises. The agricultural sector still contributes more to the Queensland economy in food and fibre production and export than tourism. In times of drought, the removal of some vegetation to feed livestock and allow for pasture growth reduces financial hardship.

Evidence from the State Land and Tree Survey (SLATS) that showed some foliage loss, also indicated there was an overall increase in tree cover, thereby attaining a balance between environmental sustainability and economic productivity. The simplistic ideological connection between blanket tree clearing, climate change and reef health claimed by Queensland's Environment Minister is based on deficient vegetation mapping regimes and ignores Australia's low overall contribution to the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Ideology needs to be challenged by a program of accurate, contemporary, scientifically-driven land condition assessments linked to funding, combined with high resolution satellite imagery and an active enforcement program, NOT the reverse onus of proof now required.



