

NICK DAMETTO
Member for Hinchinbrook



MEDIA RELEASE

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Townsville MPs need to clarify position on Reef regs

TOWNSVILLE'S three Labor MPs need to level with North Queenslanders and make their position "crystal clear" on proposed Reef regulations that will hit farmers, says Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto.

At a press conference this afternoon, Mr Dametto said he had received conflicting information from farming industry groups which disputed claims made in local media that Townsville MP Scott Stewart, Thuringowa MP Aaron Harper and Mundingburra MP Coralee O'Rourke wanted the government's proposed new Reef regulations delayed for five years.

"Our industry sources are telling us that the MPs were actually referring to a halt on any further changes to Reef regulations if the government's proposed Environment Protection Bill is passed and not that they were opposed to delaying the reef regulations in the Bill as it currently stands," Mr Dametto said.

"I'm calling on Mr Stewart, Mr Harper and Ms O'Rourke to clarify their position urgently and give farmers piece of mind that they are on their side when it comes to opposing the new regulations contained in this Bill."

Mr Dametto said if the Bill was passed in this term of parliament and Katter's Australian Party found itself in a commanding position after next year's State election, the KAP would be demanding that the party that forms government repeal this legislation within the first 100 days of government.

"This proposed legislation will be the death knell for farming if it is introduced and the KAP proudly stands with our farmers in opposing this ill-conceived Bill," he said.

"It's a Bill which not only demonises farmers for contributing to the so-called poor health of the Reef but ties them up in unworkable green tape which could potentially ruin them.

"Before any regulatory or legislative change, it is imperative that we check and replicate the Reef science so that any changes can be evidence-based and not driven by emotion."

Key concerns of the Bill highlighted by industry include its undermining of existing efforts by growers to improve water quality, imposing "big brother" style supervision over everyday farming decisions and effectively hobbling the cane industry's ability to expand.

The Bill will also force growers to provide an environmental impact statement if they want to crop an existing part of their farm they have cropped in the past and give the government powers to demand information from any advisor or company working with cane farmers.

—ENDS—

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Photo caption

Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto has called on Townsville's three Labor MPs to clarify their position on the State Government's proposed new Reef regulations.

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