



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

North Queensland: Environment

SPEECH

Wednesday, 24 September 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Christensen, George, MP	Question No.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (09:39): The greatest terrorism threat in North Queensland, it is sad to say, comes from the extreme green movement. When I say 'extreme greens', I am not talking about ordinary community groups and individuals who genuinely care about and work to improve the environment or locals who have genuine concerns about local impacts of certain projects. What I am talking about are large, well funded, well organised ecoterrorists who use fear and blackmail to coerce government and the public into adopting their extreme political and ideological viewpoints.

Despite the fact that coal and iron ore drive the nation's economy and pump billions of dollars into state and federal coffers, there are those who would destroy those industries. They would destroy our economy, our jobs and our way of life. The ecoterrorists campaigned against the expansion the Abbot Point coal terminal by claiming that 'toxic sludge' was being dumped on the reef. That is despite the fact that the dredge spoil that was being disposed of was neither toxic nor being dumped on any coral reef. They knew it was a lie, but they deliberately took the Great Barrier Reef hostage and used it as a weapon to try and coerce government and the public to their own political and ideological world view—a world view against coal and a world view where Abbot Point would not be expanded.

Well, while those ecoterrorists were tying the project up in court challenges, which they knew were baseless, potential international tourists were led to believe, through the media, that the reef was now all covered in toxic sludge. I have been advised by a tourism operator that international bookings across the Great Barrier Reef catchment area have dropped by as much as 30 per cent as a direct result of that ecoterrorist campaign.

To circumvent the frivolous court action that threatened to permanently stall the Abbot Point project and to address water quality concerns from some local tourism operators, I sought another solution—a land based solution that would nullify the reef blackmail by the ecoterrorists. Such a solution has now been announced by the state government. By continuing to fight the project, the ecoterrorists have proven their protest was never really about the environment. They got what they wanted—no offshore dumping—but they still oppose the Abbot Point expansion.

The ecoterrorists butchered the international tourism market for our greatest tourism attraction, not for the reef but for political ideology. They threatened to kill off thousands more jobs in the resource industry because they do not like coal, they do not like capitalism and they do not like people working hard for a decent living. But North Queensland will not bow down to these ecoterrorists. We will not allow them to lie, to smear, to defame and to break the law and get away with it. The activists' unauthorised entry to a port to hang themselves like daft bats from a ship-loader is illegal. And threatening to lie inside a cardboard box on a train track is an act of stupidity and an act of terrorism.

More than 600 people rallied in Bowen in support of the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion last week in defiance of these ecoterrorists. Today I put extreme greens on notice: North Queensland will not bow down to those ecoterrorists; North Queenslanders will defend their jobs and lifestyles and call out the gutless green grubs for the terrorists that they really are.