



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers
Amendment (Cubbie Station) Bill 2012**

First Reading

SPEECH

Monday, 26 November 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Katter, Bob, MP	Question No.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (10:42): In recommending the bill to the House, I have just come back from a tour of the Murray-Darling area. To see what this place has done to the Murray-Darling would make any patriotic Australian blush with embarrassment and shame. It should make every member of this place feel utterly ashamed of themselves. At Mildura, we were told that 85 shops in the town have closed. I drove around the vineyards and the orchards and I felt one in 10 were closed down and was informed that the figure was much closer to one in five. In Griffith, they said 120 shops were closed. I do not know if this is true or not, but these are the things that were being told to me. There most certainly seemed to be many shops closed. In Deniliquin, we were told that there were normally 60 or 70 houses for sale; there are now 155 houses registered for sale.

This place has destroyed the economic base of all inland New South Wales. This place has destroyed the economic base of Northern Victoria and south-eastern South Australia. This place has not destroyed Queensland, because Queensland's Murray-Darling allocation is mostly Cubbie Station. No, this place has kept all the water intact at Cubbie Station and handed it all over to a foreign corporation, when there were other bidders in Australia. What the government should have done was to break up Cubbie Station into 10 or 12 civilised sizes where there would be owner-operators instead of fly-ins from the coast. Most of Cubbie Station is done by fly-in work out of Brisbane, in the main. But instead of doing that they sold it as one big heap, and they sold it to a foreign corporation.

The allegations in this case are very interesting because they are similar to the allegations in the case concerning—and it is not sub judice at the present, so I can speak up—the South Johnstone sugar mill, which was sold. Two mills smaller than it had been sold for over \$130 million. We are talking about a mill worth \$150 million. It was sold for \$2 million because the people that are liquidators are people who are corruptible to a point of being illegal and should be committed to jail. This is happening again, again and again.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): The honourable member for Kennedy is reminded that particular allegations against individuals are best pursued through a substantive motion.

Mr KATTER: I have not made any allegations against any individuals. I have made general remarks concerning liquidators.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am simply reminding the honourable member of the standing orders.

Mr KATTER: I take the Deputy Speaker's comments. In this case it has been sold to foreigners. In the last five weeks the biggest farm in Australia, Cubbie Station, has been sold to foreigners—the biggest water licence. It has not been bought by the government for environmental flows. It has been sold to foreigners—the biggest water licence. This place sold the biggest fishing licence in Australia. Only through the actions of my colleague from Hobart here beside me, seconding this resolution—on other issues completely, environmental issues—was the decision reversed. But the government had already made the decision to sell.

I came back from Tasmania, where another 20 per cent of their second biggest industry—and it is one of their only two industries—the timber industry, has been chopped away, leaving the economy of Tasmania almost a basket case because of the actions of this government. So they have wrecked an area—not this government, mainly the last government, actually; but this government most certainly have been up to their eyeballs in it—leaving an area stretching throughout all of New South Wales. Two-thirds of New South Wales: gone. Two-thirds of Victoria: gone. One quarter of South Australia: gone, destroyed by government action. And now of the 20 per cent of what is left of poor little Tasmania, half of it has been given to some subcommittee of UNESCO over in New York. All human activity on half of Tasmania is controlled by a UNESCO subcommittee. I know, because north Queensland suffers the same fate, so I speak with authority.

But let me go over it. The biggest farm: sold. The biggest water licence: sold. The biggest fishing licence: sold. The biggest dairying area in Australia: sold. The 10th biggest cattle station in area in Australia: sold. The daddy

of them all, the big, grand, colossal Santa Claus of all destructive decisions is the Ord. Here is one of the great achievements of the Australian people—to bring irrigation and development into the north-west, the most outback and most unpopulated part of Australia. It is a great dream of all Australians. The second stage could have been put up as 1,000-hectare farms.

The government of Western Australia or the government of Australia could have put up ethanol to give us something that we could grow there—they could have done that. They continually refused. This government is the only governments in the world that does not have biofuels by law in petrol tanks. People die when you have not got oxygenated petrol in their petrol tanks. That is why they put biofuels and ethanol in their petrol tanks. We are the only country on earth not to do that.

The Chinese will not buy ethanol off Australia. Now that they are producing ethanol in Australia, they will buy it from their own operation in Australia. But they were given a huge area—some 20,000 hectares, an area bigger than Cubbie Station. It carries a \$600 million subsidy with it. The government will not subsidise Australian farmers; they will not give us a cent. The Liberal Party will not and the Labor Party will not. They will not give Australian farmers a single cent. And yet they will deliver to a foreign corporation a \$600 million subsidy. The Ord dam was built by the taxpayers of Australia. The delivery channels, which cost as much as the dam, were built with Australian taxpayers' money. And yet the government has taken it upon itself to sell them.

If they had given us ethanol and they had given us 15 or 20 1,000 hectare farms you would have been killed in the rush. But the ALP believes in corporate farming, the biggest disaster in agriculture in Australian history. The Liberal Party believes in corporate farming even more. That means that it has to be a corporation; we could not possibly have an owner operator! The only farms in Australia that operate at a profit are the owner-operator farms. Every corporate farm in this country, to my knowledge, have gone broke, not once but again and again. Collie farm has gone broke six times. The two big mango farms have gone broke four times. Then there is the disaster in grapes and wine. I do not have to tell anyone in this place about Great Southern. All the cattle stations — *(Time expired)*

Bill read a first time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): In accordance with standing order 41(c), the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.