



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.43 p.m.): I wish to start off where the Minister for Environment ended and speak about other uses of State forests. In fact, had the Minister been in the Chamber, I would have congratulated him on achieving something that no other Minister has been able to do since I have been in this place, namely, to get enough people angry at him to result in a protest rally being held in my electorate.

Mr Seeney: And mine.

Mr Nelson: And mine.

Dr WATSON: And in other electorates. A protest rally was held in my electorate on Sunday. About 100 horse riders came from The Gap Pony Club across the back of Mount Coot-tha to the Brookfield Pony Club at Brookfield Reserve to protest the impending restrictions on horse riding and other recreational pursuits in State forests. The rally was organised by Environmental Access for Recreation Inc., which was formed to address this particular concern. This is not something that has just come out of the blue. I wrote to the Minister for Environment about this issue on 12 November last year. I thought it would be worth quoting a couple of comments from his reply, which I received in December. Initially, I was fairly happy about what the Minister was proposing. He stated—

"I agree that there is a need to provide a broad spectrum of nature-based recreation opportunities for the community."

Mr Palaszczuk: What's this got to do with trees?

Dr WATSON: This concerns alternative uses. This is part of the RFA process. The honourable member should listen to this, because it is very important. The Minister recognised this when he spoke about other issues.

Mr Palaszczuk: Your greenie constituents will be after you in a moment.

Dr WATSON: This is a letter from the Minister. It states—

"While I appreciate your constituent's concerns, she can be assured that the outdoor recreation sector has not been ignored."

Unfortunately, it would appear that members of EAR think differently. Importantly, its flyer stated—

"If you are a recreational user of State Forests, National Parks, or Vacant Crown Land you need to be involved in the Regional Forest Agreement Process.

If You and Your Children want continued recreational access to Your State Forests Get Involved Now or be prepared to Lose Access to State Forests for recreational purposes"

The people who rode across Mount Coot-tha and came from other parts of my electorate as part of that protest rally are not radicals. In fact, many of them belong to environmental groups, such as REPA—the Rural Environment Planning Association—in my electorate. They want to ensure that the forest environment remains available for future generations for their enjoyment. They want to look after the environment, but they are not preservationists. They do not believe in locking away everything so that no-one has the opportunity to enjoy or use it.

Let me cite again the groups of people involved in Environmental Access for Recreation Inc. They are as follows: the Queensland Endurance Riders Association, the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association of Queensland, the pony clubs, the Queensland Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs Inc., the Dual Sport Motor Cycle Riders Association, the North Brisbane Mountain Bike Riders, and Tread Lightly! EAR represents thousands of people who use State forests across this State for recreational purposes.

It is important for everyone in the Chamber to know the aims of this group. It wants to improve the status quo regarding access to State forests. It wants to establish better liaison with the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environment and Heritage and recreational users.

An Opposition member interjected.

Dr WATSON: This is the Minister who says that he is talking to people.

As part of its aims, this group wants to establish better liaison. It wants to identify areas of State forests that are not currently available for recreational use but which may be of use in the future. It wants to establish a consistent policy for State forest use with respect to access and permits and it wants to establish an ongoing relationship with the Minister's department. It wants to promote the ongoing education of conservationist values for outdoor recreation users of forests. Those are the types of concerns that people in my electorate and in others across the State are starting to raise. What are the concerns of this group? When the Minister speaks about this matter he uses phrases such as "no net loss". This group believes that it is no use simply adding extra State forests——

Time expired.
