



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee D
Report

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (5.14 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I contribute to the debate on the portfolios of Ministers Mackenroth, Gibbs and Welford examined by Estimates Committee D. I would like to focus my remarks on that latter Minister's portfolio and begin by congratulating the Minister on the excellent work that he has undertaken since he came to this portfolio and his vision and a commitment to ensuring ecologically sustainable development in Queensland.

In May this year, the new EPA was launched and, when the office of sustainable development is established, together they will ensure that economic and environmental considerations are integrated in Queensland and that industries are supported to provide innovative solutions to pollution problems that are good for both their own bottom line and for the environment. The Minister's commitment to both jobs and environment is nowhere better evidenced than by the successful historic regional forest agreement. It is the first time in Australia that we have seen the timber industry and the conservation movement agreeing on a way forward that is a win for both. It is very disappointing to see members of the Opposition seeking at every turn to unravel that process. They are just so disappointed that they have not been able to achieve what this Government has achieved. Of course, we have had a similar attitude from the Federal Government, which would like nothing better than for this agreement to fail. However, we have shown them what is possible and what should have been achieved in other regional forest agreements.

The budget presents some challenges, and that has been acknowledged. However, those challenges are being met in far-north Queensland and I would like to focus on some of the very positive initiatives that this budget will be delivering in the far north, particularly in my electorate. The cassowary has been a real focus of attention in far-north Queensland. It has now been acknowledged by the Commonwealth as an endangered species. Of course, here in Queensland it has been on our endangered list for quite some years. It is with pleasure that I can tell the Chamber that we will soon have a dedicated cassowary conservation officer who will be appointed through funding of some \$300,000 over three years. That will really bring together the efforts of the community-based cassowary advisory committee that has been doing some excellent work with groups in the Kuranda area, Mission Beach and Daintree where we have particular hot spots for cassowaries which are at threat from dogs, cars and habitat clearing. That is going to be a really significant contribution to the work of those groups. As a result of that funding, I am sure that they will continue to make really excellent progress in better managing cassowaries.

The Marlin Coast State Marine Park, which is in my electorate, will be declared and gazetted very shortly, as will the Trinity Inlet State Marine Park. They were the missing pieces in a continuous strip of State marine park that stretched right down the east coast. They are going to be very welcome additions in providing greater protection of the coastal resources in that area. There will be funding in this budget to manage those extra State marine parks. Also to be gazetted soon will be the Smithfield conservation park surrounding the university, which will provide protection for the rainforest hill slopes in that area. At the moment, there are some outstanding problems with easements. That is being dealt with by the Department of Natural Resources. As soon as those problems are addressed, we will be able to gazette that park and start to manage it.

The Barron Gorge National Park is going to be a real big winner out of this budget. It is the most visited national park in far-north Queensland. A number of projects are under way to make that a world-class national park. For a start, some \$600,000 will be spent on a boardwalk linking the Barron Gorge lookout to the Barron Falls station, which itself has been recently upgraded through an allocation of some \$1m from Minister Bredhauer's portfolio. That will provide additional opportunities for people to appreciate the Barron Gorge and the Barron Falls.

Also this week work began on a \$500,000 project at the Speewah end of the national park. When this work is completed, that land that will be donated to the Government by Ron and Pam Elgar. In that regard, I would like to acknowledge their very great generosity. There will be access roads into that area, a toilet block, a basic camping area and interpretative work. That will give people access to the historic Smith and Douglas tracks. The further work to be carried out there involves a \$260,000 Community Jobs Plan that enables those historic tracks and other walking tracks in the national park to be upgraded. We have a major interpretative program that, through Federal Government funding and State Government funding, will provide world-class interpretative materials for that whole park area. The park will also be benefiting from some—

Time expired.
