



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Sky Rail

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (9.57 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday in the House I congratulated the winners of the 1999 Australian Tourism Awards, which included the Sky Rail rainforest cableway. Several coalition members, including the Leader of the Opposition, interjected during my speech, claiming that I had opposed the construction of Sky Rail and that I was by inference being hypocritical and insincere to congratulate the company on its success. I chose not to use the limited time available to me yesterday to take those interjections and refute the claims of members opposite. However, I am deeply offended by the remarks of those members, because they reflect on my personal integrity. I am also disappointed that the Courier-Mail chose to repeat the claims of the Opposition Leader without checking the facts of this matter. This is yet another case of the media not letting the truth spoil a good story.

I therefore wish to draw members' attention to a speech I made in the House on 30 August 1994 in the second-reading debate of the Nature Conservation Amendment Bill, in which I made clear my support for Sky Rail. In fact, my support of this development contributed to my defeat at the 1995 State election at the hands of the Green Party and the conservation movement, which waged a strong campaign against me. I wish to read an extract from that speech so that members can see for themselves that the comments shouted across this Chamber by the Leader of the Opposition were nothing but lies designed to discredit me.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would the member rephrase that by substituting "untruths".

Dr CLARK: In deference to the Chair I will rephrase that. They were nothing but untruths designed to discredit me.

Mr Hayward: Deliberate.

Dr CLARK: Deliberate untruths. I stated—

"It is obvious that in our national parks we already have considerable visitor facilities and infrastructure to enable people to access those parks and to understand and appreciate the cultural and natural values of those parks."

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am trying to hear this personal explanation.

Dr CLARK: I said further—

"The Sky Rail proposal should be seen in that light, as a proposal that will enable people to get greater access to the park in a way that will not have any long-term impact on its environment.

It will allow people to appreciate the values in the long term and learn from the interpretive facilities that will be established as part of that development.

Sure it is a commercial development, but I think that it can be seen as something that will enhance the appreciation by people of that national park area.

For that reason I have no problems with it, as I have said on past occasions. There is no doubt in my mind that it is not going to have any significant detrimental impact on the ecological

integrity of that park. Indeed, I believe that in the long run it will improve and enhance the interpretation of that area."

Mr Reeves: When was that? 1994, was it?

Dr CLARK: In 1994 that statement was made by myself in this House.

At the risk of provoking my friends in the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre yet again, I point out that Sky Rail's national recognition and lack of impact on the environment proves that I was right and they were wrong on this issue. Yesterday, I said that the behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition was contributing to the cynicism and disillusionment of the community with politicians. Unless I receive an apology—

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, this is no longer a personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am the judge of that.

Mr BEANLAND: The member is debating the issue. She is now attacking the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am the judge of that.

Dr CLARK: Unless I receive an apology from the Leader of the Opposition, he will have further damaged the reputation of politicians and confirmed that he himself has no regard for truth in this place.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The remark made by the honourable member is offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr Elder: It's true.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Dr CLARK: In deference to the Chair, I withdraw.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The remark made across the Chamber by the Deputy Premier, which echoed the remark that the honourable member just withdrew, is also offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ELDER: Mr Speaker, was it "fairies at the bottom of the garden" or that he is a sensitive little fairy? Which remark did the Leader of the Opposition find offensive? If he found it offensive, I withdraw it, even though it is true.
