



Speech by

**Dr LESLEY CLARK**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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### **WET TROPICS TREE PLANTING SCHEME**

**Dr CLARK** (Barron River—ALP) (10.21 a.m.): Last week the Labor Party celebrated the 10th anniversary of the election of Wayne Goss and Labor on 2 December 1989 and the transformation of Queensland after 32 years of National Party rule. In far-north Queensland another 10th anniversary was celebrated, but this marked a milestone of a different nature, namely that of rainforest restoration.

The Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme was established as a job creation and environmental repair program following World Heritage listing and is now 10 years old. During that time, more than one million rainforest trees have been planted over some 700 hectares with priority given to building wildlife corridors such as that linking Lake Barrine and Lake Eacham, stabilising river banks and rehabilitating wetlands.

The scheme is currently supported by, and operates in, some 10 local authority areas, and is managed on their behalf by the North Queensland Afforestation Association. I would like to pay tribute to the association president, Douglas Shire Mayor Mike Berwick, scheme founder and renowned rainforest ecologist, Geoff Tracey, and manager, Bill Sokolich. The scheme, which today employs 40 people, has forged a reputation as one of the most successful of its kind and its achievements are unparalleled in Australia.

The Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme also works in cooperation with other groups that I would like to commend such as TREAT—Trees for Evelyn and Atherton Tableland—whose founder, Joan Wright, won an inaugural Wet Tropics Golden Cassowary Award for her achievements. Also making a contribution are local Landcare and ICM groups, Kuranda Envirocare and Tree Force, to which I belong and which is supplied with trees by the scheme.

The Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme used to be complemented by a major farm forestry scheme—the community rainforest reafforestation scheme—which planted four million trees over 2,000 hectares between 1992 and 1996. Tragically, the scheme was lost after Commonwealth funding was withdrawn upon the election of the Commonwealth Government which dismantled Labor's Working Nation labour market program.

Today the Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme faces a similar uncertain future because it is funded by the Natural Heritage Trust. This vitally important scheme needs security of funding to establish a long-term planting unit to continue its work so that the destruction of the rainforest that occurred in earlier times when people did not appreciate its—

Time expired.

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