



Speech by

**Hon. R. WELFORD**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Hansard 24 August 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Rainforest Rehabilitation**

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources)(9.53 a.m.), by leave: Last Friday, I had the opportunity to visit the Atherton Tableland to catch up on some truly inspirational rainforest rehabilitation work being carried out by my Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the local community. Queensland has become a renowned world leader in the science and practise of rebuilding tropical rainforest ecosystems from scratch. At the QPWS Centre for Tropical Rehabilitation at Lake Eacham near Mareeba we are involved in cutting edge research in rainforest creation technology. We have developed the unique ability to restore complete ecosystems and these are already being utilised overseas.

The potential benefits for the restoration and rehabilitation of the world's tropical rainforests are enormous. The potential benefits to Queensland are enormous. We now have the ability to export our ecosystem knowledge for the benefit of the Queensland economy. For decades we have been chopping down rainforests. Now is the time to start rebuilding them again. Unheralded, we have been developing complete national rainforest ecosystems and now have the opportunity to help Australia and other countries restore their rainforests and degraded lands.

This is brilliant stuff: Queensland rainforest technology and experience being used to replace so much that has been destroyed. Our knowledge and experience is already flowing to Asia, Papua New Guinea and Latin and South America and their students and scientists are beginning to come to Queensland to learn how we grow new rainforests from square one. One of the reasons that we have been so successful is the excellent relationship between my Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the 500-strong tree planting community group known as TREAT, which stands for Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tableland. The Lake Eacham nursery produces 40,000 trees a year and TREAT volunteers give more than 6,000 hours of labour annually planting those trees.

This is a genuine partnership between the local community and Government in Queensland and it is the genesis of healing our globe on a grand scale. One of their key projects is a world-first ecological corridor on private land at Malanda. It is known as Donaghy's corridor and is on land owned by John and Theresa Donaghy. It links the Lake Barrine section of the Crater Lakes National Park with the Gadgarra State Forest. It is a 510-metre long strip varying in width from 70 to 120 metres. It does not seem like much, does it, but until four years ago Donaghy's corridor was a degraded stream bank. Now it has been completely revegetated and ecologically rehabilitated. Its creation is a great breakthrough of global scientific and ecological significance, not to mention local community action. It is already at the forefront of international research on the viability of corridors conserving wildlife and preserving sustainable natural ecosystems.

This ecological rehabilitation program is successfully addressing the issues of forest fragmentation, landscape connectivity and the role of non-reserve lands in maintaining biodiversity. It is also a fantastic example of land-holders working with our parks and wildlife experts to preserve the animals and plants on privately owned land. Species such as the southern cassowary, musky rat kangaroo and lemuroid ringtail possum which are at risk from habitat loss will benefit from this ribbon of land connecting two substantial areas of protected lands.

The work of my new Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the local Atherton Tableland community helping to save the planet is smart business for Queensland.