



Speech by

**Hon. R. WELFORD**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Hansard 3 March 1999

### **REVOCATION OF STATE FOREST AREAS**

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Evertton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (4.23 p.m.) I move—

- "(1) That this House agrees that the Proposal by the Governor in Council to revoke the setting apart and declaration as State forest under the Forestry Act of those areas specified in the documents previously tabled this day, be carried out.
- (2) That Mr Speaker convey a copy of this Resolution to the Minister for submission to His Excellency the Governor in Council."

These proposed amendments to the forest estate make provision for the revocation of the whole or parts of certain forestry reserves which are located near Mackay, Blair Athol, Mapleton, Maryborough and Gympie. Careful consideration has been given to each proposal and in each instance detailed consultation has occurred with affected State and local government agencies.

The first proposal deals with the revocation of 35.85 hectares of land from State forest 679, which is located about 55 kilometres west of Mackay. In 1993, the Queensland Government gave conditional approval for the development of the Teemburra Creek Dam, with funding provided by the State Government, local sugar industry sources and the Sugar Industry Infrastructure Package. The dam has subsequently been constructed at a cost of some \$45m, with a further \$17m for associated irrigation works. It provides improved water supply to local sugarcane lands, it provides additional urban supply and it meets supply requirements for new industrial developments in the Pioneer Valley. The area now proposed for revocation from State forest 679 comprises part of the inundation area of the dam.

The second proposal involves the excision of about 28.382 hectares from State forest 117 near Blair Athol. In 1985, Queensland Rail sought to acquire three small areas of the reserve for construction of Stage 3 of the Clermont-Blair Athol rail line. Investigations disclosed that the proposed rail construction would have no significant adverse effect on the State forest and the then Conservator of Forests offered no objection to the transfer of affected forestry land to Queensland Rail's control. The line has since been constructed. Survey, amendment of affected grazing leases and other administrative dealings associated with the action have taken some time, and these proposed amendments to the State forest will regularise the situation that now exists.

The third proposal provides for the revocation of about 3.9 hectares from State forest 1239, which is located about eight kilometres north of Mapleton. In 1987, an adjoining land-holder applied to purchase about three hectares of the reserve for addition to his property. Investigations disclosed that the area was infested with groundsel and other weeds and the trees that remained were mostly non-commercial species. The land was isolated from the main body of State forest 1239 by the Cooloolabin Road and was external to the fire protection system of the reserve. The area was no longer required for forestry purposes and it was approved that action be initiated to exclude it from the reserve to allow it to be dealt with further under the Land Act. A case of priority could not be established in favour of the applicant and, therefore, following revocation from the forest estate, the land will be disposed of under normal Government land management system guidelines. In conjunction with this action, the area of constructed road is also to be excluded from the reserve.

The fourth proposal deals with the revocation of 43.994 hectares of land from State forest 431, which is located about 45 kilometres west of Mackay. In 1989, the lessee of part of State forest 431 applied to have three small sections of his lease revoked from the reserve for addition to his adjoining freehold land. The areas in question had been treated previously and partly cleared and had been managed for many years as part of his adjoining farming enterprise. In 1992, the department indicated that, provided the applicant met all costs associated with the application and Parliament approved the revocation of the State forest status of the land, it would be prepared to seek Executive Council authority for the sale of the areas to the applicant. Survey and other administrative processes associated with the action have taken some time and revocation of the affected areas from the forest estate will allow the action to proceed.

The fifth proposal involves the excision of 27.764 hectares from State forest 915 near Maryborough. The Maryborough Sugar Factory Limited has applied to the department to purchase or lease about 23 hectares of State forest 915 for sugar growing. Investigations have disclosed that the area in question is isolated from the balance of the reserve by the Walker Point Main Irrigation Channel and contains only a small quantity of landscaping timbers. It has no dedicated access, contains no identified conservation values, is external to the fire management system of the reserve, and is no longer required for forestry purposes. Maryborough Sugar are the owners of adjoining land parcels and there may be grounds for a priority sale of the area to the company after its revocation from the estate. The total area of 27.764 hectares now proposed to be excluded from the reserve includes this area plus the area of the irrigation channel.

I should inform the Parliament that I have recently been advised by Maryborough Sugar Factory Limited that at this stage it does not wish to proceed with the acquisition of that parcel, primarily because of the low sugar price at the present time and the fact that there is not an immediate identified need for the additional land. However, because the land is isolated by the irrigation channel from the remaining part of the State forest and has no values of importance either in conservation terms or to the forest itself, I intend to proceed with the revocation for the time being.

The final proposal provides for revocation of the whole of State forest 1255 which is located about 20 kilometres north-east of Gympie. The State forest reserve containing about 4.25 hectares was gazetted in 1975 to protect a stand of Gympie messmate and for possible recreation use. The Cooloola Shire Council has applied for the area to be transferred to council control as a parks and gardens reserve. A management plan which specifies conservation of a stand of Gympie messmate and public education as the primary management objectives for the proposed reserve has been developed in support of the application. The plan allows for improved public access to part of the land with the balance of the reserve to remain undeveloped as a typical example of the natural forest cover of the region. It also allows for the land to be managed as an exhibition of farm forestry strategies and provides massive recreation opportunities for the local community and travelling public.

The proposed transfer of this reserve to council control will have no resource implications and the Department of Primary Industries Forestry has no objection to the proposal. Support for the conversion is high among local residents and the Cooloola Shire Council, which wishes to be involved in more active management and recreational use of the area. The Land Administration division has agreed that the area be gazetted as a reserve for park and environmental purposes under the trusteeship of the Cooloola Shire Council.

Native title issues have been considered in relation to all of the proposals referred to and in each case it has been determined that the action may proceed. The major part of the areas revoked from the forest estate under the third, fourth and fifth proposals will pass from State control. Disposal action will occur under normal Government land management system guidelines. The net proceeds of these disposals which are available to my department will be applied to the purchase of suitable alternative land for reservation as State forest. I strongly support each of the proposals and commend them for the approval of the House.

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