



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10 a.m.), by leave: When the Labor Government came to office in 1989, just 2% of Queensland was protected by our national parks system. Before that, decisions about the declaration and location of national parks was largely ad hoc and many parks were created on the basis that the land was of no use to anyone. As a result, only half of Queensland's diverse range of plants and animals were represented in our national park estate. We had no proper nature conservation legislation to protect endangered plants and animals living outside our national parks.

But the good news is that over the past decade a lot of progress has been achieved to correct Queensland's approach. The highest possible proportion of Queensland's native plant and animal species is now represented in the expanding park estate. A targeted national park acquisition program, based on getting a comprehensive representation of biogeographical regions, has been established and has become the model for the rest of Australia. We have the strongest Nature Conservation Act in Australia in terms of the protection given by national park status.

We need to continue with renewed energy the job that previous Labor Governments have started. I was delighted to assist the Premier in launching the new Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service at Ravensbourne National Park near Toowoomba on 9 May a few weeks ago and to help the Premier raise the new Herbie, the new 21st century version of Herbie the possum—the logo of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service—up the flagpole. Mr Speaker, with your permission, I would like to show each member of the House the new Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service logo—the 21st century Herbie the possum—and the new hat to be worn by parks and wildlife staff, with Herbie the possum proudly displayed on every hat that wildlife officers will wear. Mr Speaker, do I have your permission to be covered?

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, you have my permission.

Mr WELFORD: Thank you, Mr Speaker. What Herbie represents is a revitalisation and consolidation of the role of national parks in Queensland. Our parks and wildlife underpin one of our biggest industries—tourism—and this means jobs for Queenslanders. The Parks and Wildlife Service has a number of important priorities: better management and conservation of our natural and cultural resources; sustainable tourism and visitor opportunities, with a special focus on interpretive services for visitors; closer partnerships between local communities and national parks; and a greater level of involvement of traditional owners in our park management.

The Beattie Labor Government is managing one of the most comprehensive park systems in Australia, a true legacy for our children and for the economic growth of our State. In less than a year our Government has gazetted a further 94,201 hectares of national park and increased the total protected area estate to 4.08%—closer to our Government's long-term aim of 5%. The new Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is a recognition that valuing our environment and conserving and presenting our natural assets is both an immeasurable investment and an immeasurable income earner for all Queenslanders.
