



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER
MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 25 August 1999

NATIONAL PARKS

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.21 a.m.): This morning I draw the attention of the House to the declining condition of many of Queensland's national parks under the Beattie Government. It is of great concern to me, to neighbouring land-holders and to every Queenslanders that these parks are falling into rack and ruin because of underfunded or non-existent pest control programs and a severe shortage of park rangers.

The first Beattie Budget bloated the bureaucracy at the expense of our national parks. \$400,000 was provided to establish the Environmental Protection Agency, and 51 new positions were to be created within the Brisbane-based office this past year. Then the department purchased at least another eight properties for national parks—a total area of some 71,000 hectares—but did not increase park ranger numbers.

It is no wonder that weeds and pest populations are exploding and that there are increasing problems with vandalism, trespassing and even hunting. Neighbouring land-holders have been forced into the role of first line defence against the spread of weeds and feral animals in national parks. They are being made to pay for the mismanagement of the Beattie Government.

The State land pest management project is nothing more than window-dressing. It has not received one cent of extra funding. All the buzzwords and flashy project names in the world will not help to control feral pigs or weeds in national parks. Our national parks need dollars to be spent on the ground.

This year's Budget presents the Government with an opportunity to correct this situation and put more funding into rangers and pest control. I call on the Beattie Government to take this opportunity to do the right thing by our national parks and not throw the burden back upon our land-holders to make sure that feral animals are not running around. The Government should do the right thing by national parks.