



Speech by

BRUCE DAVIDSON

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard 17 May 2000

NATIONAL PARK ESTATE

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (6.07 p.m.): I rise tonight to second the motion moved by my colleague the member for Keppel and, in doing so, to bring to the attention of members of this House and the Minister some issues that I am really concerned about at Noosa National Park. Noosa National Park is one of those ideal national parks that is at the end of one of the most vibrant tourist streets in the world: Hastings Street, Noosa Heads. It enjoys 1.5 million visitors per year. The local community, Queenslanders, Australian tourists and international tourists flock to Noosa National Park in their numbers to experience one of the best environmental experiences at the end of one of the most vibrant tourism streets in the world.

In my time in Government, I was able to work with the honourable Brian Littleproud, my ministerial colleague, on the urgent need to upgrade the entrance to Noosa National Park. Mr Littleproud dedicated \$460,000 to upgrade the entrance to Noosa National Park, formalising car parking and establishing showers, safety rail fencing, barbecues and so on. It was an absolute credit to the Minister for Environment at the time, Brian Littleproud, that he was able to budget for a requirement at Noosa National Park that had been identified some decade ago and neglected in the six years of the Goss Government from 1989 to 1995.

The Noosa National Park is an economic generator not just for Noosa but for the region. It creates a \$54m economic benefit for the community and the region. It has been identified by Bob Beeton from the University of Queensland as generating about 797 jobs annually. It is a real key for Noosa as a tourism destination. I am ashamed that this Minister has obviously absolutely and totally neglected the need for further funding in Noosa National Park. A month ago he replied to a question on notice from me that he had committed only \$2,000 in this year's Budget for infrastructure funding in Noosa National Park and only \$22,000 for maintenance in Noosa National Park. That is an absolute disgrace. This is one of the most popular national parks in Queensland, with a lousy \$2,000 to upgrade any infrastructure requirements Noosa National Park has.

I cannot believe that we have a Minister for the Environment who is allowing walking tracks and destinations in national parks right across this State—destinations that many communities are dependent on for their economic benefit and economic growth and to which tourists from all over the world come to visit—to be closed down. The walking track from Tea Tree Bay to Hells Gate at Noosa National Park is a disgrace. It is a disgrace on the part of this Government having regard to all those people who promote themselves as environmentalists in my area because it is so dangerous. The walk from Tea Tree Bay to Granite Bay is on a track that is one person wide, of exposed rocks and tree roots. There has been no trimming of the growth there for two or three years. The walk from the steps at the Hells Gates/Alexandria Bay turn-off is an absolute disgrace. It is unsafe.

We promote our destinations internationally for tourists. We make so many statements about access for disabled people to national parks and so many statements about safety for the elderly, the frail and the young. As a member of this Parliament, given the run-down condition of the Noosa National Park walking tracks, this is of great concern to me. If this Minister wants to be remembered as a Minister for the Environment, he faces the challenge of going to the Treasurer and acquiring the funding to make sure that these tracks in our national parks are a safe destination for all the people who use them. There are a number of users in Noosa—surfers, swimmers, environmentalists,

barbecuers, picnickers, young people, old people, koala watchers. It is used as an exercising area for people running and walking. Its 1.5 million visitors a year really do enjoy the amenity of the national park. I cannot believe this Minister cannot find any money in his budgets to ensure that the walking tracks and running tracks are of a safe nature for all those who use them.

I know that the Minister is an environmentalist at heart. I implore the Minister to do what he can to ensure that funding is made available to make that walking track in the Noosa National Park safe for all users. It is well past time it was done, with the wet years we have had in the last couple of years and with the erosion that has taken place and the damage that has been done to the rest of the environment. This is an issue the Minister should take on board to ensure that officers of the department inspect that track and get it upgraded as quickly as possible.

Time expired.
