



Speech by

## Hon. V. LESTER

### MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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Hansard 15 March 2000

#### FRASER ISLAND

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (11.09 p.m.): I have to comment tonight on the atrocities that are occurring in relation to the management of Fraser Island. I have to say to this Parliament and make it very, very clear indeed that the Fraser Island Area Management Committee has asked for a direct Budget allocation of \$1,396,165 from the State Government, but that has not been provided. The only money that Fraser Island has received is \$2,441,866 by way of receipts from permits for camping and other associated user-pay permits.

This is not good enough. The Commonwealth also contributes money to the management of Fraser Island, but that is based on what the State Government contributes. This State Government, supposedly the champion of the environment, has given absolutely nothing to this most magnificent island—the greatest island of sand in the whole world. This Government has decided that it is going to totally ignore it, and it cannot deny that. I call on the Minister, Rod Welford, to show cause to the people and to explain why Fraser Island has been allowed to fall literally and unfortunately into rack and ruin by the present State Government.

I have been advised that funds available for the management of Fraser Island are about to run out. Indeed, they were meagre funds—in fact, no funds in the beginning. I am advised that ranger numbers have just been cut by six; island roads and tracks are not being adequately maintained; and new road maintenance equipment, which was expected to be running by now, has not been purchased. Their only equipment is an old grader—ex-Forestry Department. Can honourable members imagine what that would be like? There is an old Komatsu loader and two trucks. They pass their life as garbage removal vehicles, and there are no tractors. Goodness me! This Government, champion of the environment, has lost the plot and is certainly no longer the champion of the environment in any shape or form.

The camping management plan issued as a draft in July 1998 is still only a draft plan, despite general agreement that it should be a sound and, indeed, ongoing plan. To implement the plan, the State's share of the expenditure would be some \$750,000 for each of the past two years. Since no funds have been committed yet, all of the following projects are on hold: planned improvements to beach camp sites, but there have been no improvements to the camp sites; and closure of the Lake McKenzie camp ground and rehabilitation of the area. We know, of course, that the level of water there is slowly falling and nothing is being done to address that problem.

Another project that has been put on hold is the expansion to the camp ground at Central Station. That has not got going. For goodness' sake, what is the Government on about? Another one on hold is a planned new camp ground at Indian Head, which has also not gone ahead. This is a pretty disgraceful effort, I have to say. Then they decided that they would like a computerised camp booking system. Would that not be a sensible way to do things? But this Government has not got the money. It could not care less. It is as simple as that.

**Mr Baumann:** The Environment Minister is not listening.

**Mr LESTER:** There you go; there is the Minister for Environment and I think he is asleep. He has just woken up. He is getting better.

**Mr WELFORD:** I rise to a point of order. I know that the honourable member wears glasses, but he ought to be able to tell the difference between when I am awake and when I am asleep.

**Mr LESTER:** I have to admit that I can never tell the difference, unfortunately, even when I am close to him.

That just goes to show how much he cares for Fraser Island. He goes down there and outlines what he is going to do to Fraser Island and he gets a big photo in the paper. Then he runs away and forgets all about it. For goodness' sake!

Other management strategies include the May 1998 report "Managing Visitors and Commercial Operators for Ecological Sustainability" and the April 1999 report "Draft Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy". He ought to know a bit about that. Nothing happened there, either.

Time expired.

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