



Speech by

CARRYN SULLIVAN

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

Hansard 5 April 2001

NATURE CONSERVATION [FOREST RESERVES] REGULATION 2000

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (6.10 p.m.): I am at a loss as to why the opposition is opposing this regulation. It is all in the name; it is the SEQRF Agreement. The agreement was actually signed by the Queensland Timber Board, the conservation groups and the government.

Ms Male: Sounds like an agreement to me.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: It sounds like an agreement to me, too. It paves the way for the establishment of a world-class conservation reserve system with national prominence and international recognition. The agreement and transfer of these lands will nearly double the size of the conservation reserve in south-east Queensland immediately and significantly. It will increase it further over the term of the agreement and thus significantly add to the maintenance of the biodiversity in those areas.

We must remember that south-east Queensland's population is predicted to double from 1991 levels within 20 years. This increases the threat to biodiversity by such things as land clearing, fragmentation of habitats and increased pest and weed invasion. In my electorate of Pumicestone there is a real need for areas in which people, especially young people, can go and enjoy themselves in a natural setting. I have already had concerns expressed to me, and I know that this need will increase as the population grows.

The transfer of these forests will contribute to a more comprehensive, adequate and representative system of reserves in south-east Queensland and, in particular, will provide protection for the following natural and cultural resources: 40 threatened regional ecosystems, three of which are endangered; 14 regional ecosystems which are currently unrepresented in the protected area estate; 63 regional ecosystems which have low representation in the protected area estate; and 44 threatened fauna species, eight of which are endangered, 19 are rare and 17 are vulnerable. What does this tell us? If we do not act now, we lose the lot.

The SEQRFA also provides the opportunity to protect, to name just a few—I had better get these right or I will have the member for Callide coming down on me like a tonne of bricks—the yellow-belly glider, the kroombit tinker frog, the cascade tree frog, the glossy black cockatoo, the red and grey goshawk and the powerful owl.

The transfer of these forests will also provide protection for at least 99 threatened flora species, including 11 endangered, 47 rare and 26 vulnerable plants—to name just a few, the Gittin's wattle, the blackdown bottlebrush and Sharp's alyxia—and will significantly enhance the quality of south-east Queensland's water catchments through the protection of vegetation and landscapes.

The transfers of these lands will provide for a higher level of protection for significant World Heritage listed areas in the central eastern rainforest. In addition to the current conservation reserves, these lands now account for approximately 60 per cent of the total amount of old growth in the region. For a system of conservation reserves to be comprehensive, adequate and representative, wilderness representation is a necessity.

Of the identified 250,000 hectares of wilderness in the region, over 80 per cent is now safely conserved within south-east Queensland's protected area system. I applaud the Labor Party government for that, too. That is what the mover of this motion wants to destroy. The protection of

Queensland's biodiversity is essential for maintaining our support systems—not only for ourselves but also for future generations, of which I have one.

There are also very significant cultural values in these forests which deserve greater protection. There are 172 known cultural heritage sites, of which at least 45 are significant, including at least 19 above the National Estate threshold and seven of which are a part of the National Estate. The south-east Queensland forests agreement recognises the cultural values of these forests.

I acknowledge—and I know that my Labor colleagues acknowledge—and respect the deep connection that Aboriginal people have with these forests. I share their concern for the land and agree with the need to care for it. The traditional owners of the lands in the western Scenic Rim and Dularcha forests are already participating in the planning process for those areas. I thank them for this. We cannot realistically plan the future management without their involvement.

Last week officers of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service attended the land summit near Bundaberg held by the Gurang Land Council. I am told that the planners and the traditional owners were able to sit down and discuss how they will move forward in planning for the future management and protection of the forests in the northern part of south-east Queensland. It is this practical approach to caring for the land that is needed. We all want to care for this country, and the central involvement of the traditional owners is needed and respected. It is our duty to ensure that our rich heritage, both natural and cultural, is protected now and into the future.

We need to applaud and support the implementation of the south-east Queensland forests agreement, not pull it apart and destroy it. We need to protect our heritage, not abandon it. Unlike the opposition, this government recognises that native title is a fact of life and we need to work cooperatively to resolve outstanding issues. Agreements such as this south-east Queensland forest agreement can deliver outcomes and should be supported in a bipartisan manner. There has been ample evidence of the community's willingness to embrace reconciliation, and it is about time the opposition approached it in a constructive way.
