



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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NATIONAL PARKS

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.49 p.m.): I join in this debate because I think it is a very important debate, particularly for recreational users in south-eastern Queensland. Going by the number of people in this House who ride horses, we could form a horse riding club instead of a bowls club and have an annual ride instead of a bowls carnival. In the past 11 years I have had the pleasure of going on a three-day ride through a lot of this country with six of my friends from Toowoomba.

It is just absolutely wonderful that people can enjoy recreation in these areas and go into some of these really wild areas around the Great Dividing Range and along the Queensland-New South Wales border. The important thrust of tonight's debate is about having some commonsense here and making sure that all these people, be they beekeepers, people who collect particular flowers, people who enjoy fossicking or four-wheel driving, motorbike trail riders and so on, can still have the recreational opportunities but partake in them in a sensible and balanced way. We are talking about quite different uses when we look at people who walk and hike and people who ride horses compared with four-wheel drives or trail riders on motorbikes and so on.

The point that has been coming through tonight is that people have been able to ride horses through national parks, particularly in the area of the bicentennial trail, which is one of the magnificent trails in Australia. It goes from the top of Cape York Peninsula down to Melbourne. It was forged by a number of people who went through and mapped and planned it. It actually passes the front gate of the member for Callide. It travels through areas of civilisation and through the mountains. I have ridden parts of it where there is lantana up to your neck. On that note, I think that it would be a good project for Corrective Services to keep the path nice and clear for those who want to use it. It is a wonderful trail and in parts it goes through national parks. It is one of the great trails of Australia. It is something that future generations will forever treasure and it is something that more and more people should be able to access. People should know exactly where it is and it should be able to be kept exactly as it was when it was forged by those people back in the 1980s.

The important part about this debate is no net loss of recreation, which was the promise from the RFA. As the RFA process proceeds and as it goes through changes of tenure in that process, we have to make sure that there is not any net loss. There has been a lot of talk tonight about consultation. I can tell members that a lot of recreation groups are very concerned that they are going to lose this access by stealth. These recreation groups are looking out for not only their groups here today but also in the future—so that young people can go away camping with their families or partake in four-wheel driving on designated tracks or in dedicated areas, particularly in some of these forest areas where they would not cause any damage. Obviously we do not want motorbike trail riders tearing around the suburbs. If they can be a member of a club or association and can go to a place where particular pathways and tracks exist so they do not damage the environment, it gives these young people the opportunity to let off a bit of steam and to go out and see the environment exactly as it is and to appreciate the environment for what it is.

Mr Seeney: Wild pigs.

Mr HORAN: Of course wild pigs are more trouble than ever.

As previous speakers have mentioned, we did have some correspondence from Mr George Main regarding the Kroombit Tops and about the shifting of the bicentennial trail there. Other speakers have pointed out that brumbies have been running there for about 100 years and have had no impact on the area, let alone the dam that is supplied by catchment for that area or the dam about 60 kilometres away. It is time for a bit of commonsense. I commend the motion because it is trying to force the government to make sure that not only is there this commitment to the environment but also there is some sensible, balanced commitment that will allow for people to continue these recreational activities and not have a system of closure by stealth. The government should certainly leave the bicentennial trail alone.

When we talk about heritage, we see that people leave the facades of old buildings up when they build new buildings because we cannot change something that is historical and part of our history. That trail was designed and implemented by R. M. Williams himself and it should be left exactly as it is. I am happy to support the motion. It is a very worthwhile motion.
