



Speech by

ANDREW McNAMARA

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Hansard 16 April 2002

DINGOES, FRASER ISLAND

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.15 p.m.): The matter of public importance in relation to which I rise to address the House today relates to a very special part of my electorate—Fraser Island. I note that the Minister for Environment in recent weeks has made several ministerial statements updating the parliament on the excellent work that his department is doing and continues to do in implementing the Dingo Management Plan for Fraser Island. It is therefore with some regret that I feel it necessary to bring to the attention of the House the activities of the so-called Friends of Fraser Group and the member for Maryborough—who, regrettably, is not in the chamber at the moment—who choose to spread misinformation on the issues and incite people into provoking and obstructing rangers on the island as they carry out their very important duties.

These are serious allegations, and it gives me no pleasure whatsoever to know that another member of this place would behave in such a fashion. That is particularly so when Fraser Island is not even in his electorate and the voters of Hervey Bay will not be able to pass judgment on his actions at the next election, despite the member's interference in arrangements which have been put in place for their safety. Nevertheless, I feel it necessary to detail these matters, which are of considerable importance to my electorate and my constituents.

Fraser Island is indeed a special place, and I have made it my business to ensure that it is managed well. Fraser Island is so special that over 300,000 people per year visit the island from all over the world. This has massive economic benefits for Hervey Bay, but of course, it presents additional challenges for staff from the Department of Environment.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers do an excellent job, not only on Fraser Island but also across the state, often in difficult circumstances, and I commend them for it. They have my support. Their job is not made any easier when organisations and individuals deliberately set out to frustrate them. We saw evidence of this a few weeks ago, with the overflowing rubbish bin issue and the associated media beat-up. Instead of informing the rangers that bins were full so that action could be taken, the so-called Friends of Fraser Group took some photos and held on to them for a few weeks, and then issued a media release condemning the rangers. So much for caring for the island! So much for working together to make the island better and safer!

Fraser Island does not need these sorts of friends—friends whose sole agenda is to be allowed to drive their four-wheel drives whenever and wherever they like, regardless of the impacts or effects on others or the environment. But what is worse is that a member of this House aids and abets them by explicitly encouraging people to incite and obstruct rangers who are only doing their job of protecting people and the island.

I table a fax to a Fraser Island resident from the member for Maryborough along with a typed translation for the benefit of honourable members who may not be able to interpret his printing. It states in part—

Why not buy a roll—

he is referring to a type of netting—

and promote and sell it to campers—with a permission necessary sign—to exclude dingoes and rangers?

You may make some money, you should provoke some rangers...

I will not quote from the rest of the fax, because the language is in fact unparliamentary. It is unfortunate that some people choose a confrontationist approach instead of working constructively with the government to manage this special part of Queensland. It is doubly unfortunate that these people are playing politics with an issue that is very, very serious. The government, as outlined in previous ministerial statements, has a comprehensive and effective dingo management strategy in place to minimise the risk to humans from dingoes on Fraser Island.

The member for Maryborough has on his letterhead the slogan 'People Before Politics'. It is about time he heeded that advice. Urging people to deliberately obstruct rangers and mocking the rangers in the performance of their duties is not just a slur on the rangers; it is more than an inconvenient nuisance to them. The duties that they are trying to carry out are directly aimed at preserving human life. This behaviour is irresponsible and dangerous.

It is one thing for the member for Maryborough to neglect his electorate—the voters of Maryborough will get their say on his performance in due course—but I will not stand for him meddling in these very serious matters in my electorate. The preservation of human life is the most serious issue with which we as members of parliament can ever be confronted, and it is not an issue for games and stunts of this sort. The member for Maryborough should stick to sexing Saratoga and leave the serious issues involved in the management of Fraser Island for the protection of human life to those of us with a genuine interest in these matters. After his embarrassing performance during question time today, it might be well if he considered his frequently publicly asked question about whether he should continue as the member for Maryborough and answered it in the negative.
