



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 26 March 2003

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Great Walks of Queensland

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (9.48 a.m.): Late last year I launched the Great Walks of Queensland. The four concept papers released on the Great Walks of Queensland were the great walks in the Whitsundays, Mackay highlands, Fraser Island and the Blackall Ranges on the sunshine coast hinterland.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr WELLS: I thank honourable members for their support for those projects. The concept papers provide information of the route and highlight features and facilities of each Great Walk. Concept papers for the Gold Coast hinterland and Wet Tropics Great Walks will be released in the near future. We have advanced beyond the planning stage. Works have now commenced on the Great Walks for Fraser Island, the Sunshine Coast hinterland and the Whitsunday.

Ms Jarratt: Hear, hear!

Mr WELLS: I note the enthusiasm of honourable members, particularly the honourable member for Whitsunday, because at the start of this year she and I stood on a vantage point in the Conway National Park and could see the rainforest-clad mountains sweeping down to a jewelled sea dotted with the emerald spots of the Whitsunday Islands. We knew then just what a terrific program this was. I actually had the opportunity to visit three of the Great Walks of Queensland and held local launches of the Fraser Island, Whitsunday and Mackay highlands Great Walks. The Great Walks project is an excellent example of how we are demonstrating our commitment to sustainability.

Mr Wellington: Hear, hear!

Mr WELLS: I thank the honourable member for Nicklin. The project balances conservation of nature with the opportunity for Queensland families and tourists to enjoy our special places. For example, works to create the Whitsunday Great Walk have included weed removal, feral pig and dog control, and seed collection for revegetation of an old logging road as well as construction of the track and camping areas. The Great Walks of Queensland is also undertaking an innovative application of the government's Creative Queensland policy. Art and environment projects will be undertaken for each Great Walk.

Mr Foley: Hear, hear!

Mr WELLS: I thank the Minister for the Arts for his support and his inspiration. Artists will be able to respond to the special natural and cultural values of each Great Walk and have their works displayed in public exhibitions. This will result in exciting outcomes for both the Great Walks and the arts community, including increasing awareness of the connection between arts and the environment, employment for regional artists and strengthening community capacity and identity through the arts.

Staged openings across Queensland are planned. The Fraser Island and Whitsunday Great Walks will be open to walkers in July 2004. I thank the honourable member for Hervey Bay for his support of that project and his coordination of the community response has been integral in the progress we have made. It is planned that the next Great Walk to open will be the Wet Tropics in December the following year and the Mackay highlands and Sunshine Coast hinterlands projects completed at the end of 2005. The Great Walks of Queensland project heralds an exciting future for bushwalkers, environmental protection, education and tourism.