



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGE

Hansard 27 November 2003

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Environment

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (9.51 a.m.): In 2001 we had virtually no reporting system on the health of our waterways in south-east Queensland. Now we have an annual report card that has seen the health of Moreton Bay improve. Nitrogen discharges are now one-third of those in 2000, despite a population increase of nine per cent.

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mr WELLS: I thank the honourable minister. In 2001 we announced funding for a statewide program to help improve the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef through a Sustainable Catchments program. Now the Burdekin, Port Douglas and Mackay landholders are working with councils and conservation groups to assist Queensland farmers in rehabilitating and protecting vegetation along wetlands and waterways. This program is a win-win for landholders, conservationists and the Great Barrier Reef.

At the beginning of this term plastic bags were clogging our drains and killing our marine life such as dugong and turtle. Now, to address this problem, we have introduced biodegradable bait bags aimed at reducing pollution in our oceans. Non-biodegradable plastic shopping bags are to be phased out as a result of an initiative at the national level led by Queensland.

At the beginning of this term our home kerbside recycling was good but there was no public place recycling program. Now around 500 tonnes of material has to date been recycled from Doomben, the Gabba, Suncorp and public sites such as the Brisbane CBD and the Townsville CBD—a first for Queensland and a first for Australia.

At the start of this term, the idea of having a minimum footprint left by a residential development was just a concept. Now we have a number of sustainable developments under way. Most recently we announced a sustainable partnership at Coconut Point on the Capricorn Coast, near Yeppoon—

Mr Schwarten: Hear, hear! It's very welcome too.

Mr WELLS: I thank the honourable the minister—where 64 hectares will be actually donated by the developer to become a national park. This kind of development is a template for all of Queensland.

In 2001 we announced a sustainable parks initiative to result in long-term environmental, economic and social benefits. Today, Moreton Island and Carnarvon have already benefited through the installation of water-efficient taps, toilets and shower heads, solar pumps, recycle bins and solar power supply equipment.

I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

At the start of this term we promised 140 new rangers. Now we have those new 140 permanent rangers employed in our parks across the State.

We promised to implement a Dingo Management Plan for Fraser Island—that plan has been implemented.

Queensland has been the first and only state in Australia to introduce a comprehensive State Coastal Plan to protect our beaches and waterways along the coast—now that Plan is a reality. Our beaches and coastal beauty spots will be the heritage of all Queenslanders.

Each year more than 13 million people enjoy the wonders of Queensland's national parks and forests—at the beginning of this term we allocated \$10 million and announced the creation of 5 great walks across Queensland. The Great Walks for Mackay, Sunshine and Gold Coast hinterland, Wet Tropics and Fraser Island are all now under way.

At the beginning of this term the northern hairy nosed wombat was facing extinction—now a 1.9 m high-20 km long predator proof fence at a cost of \$400 000 has been constructed around parts of Epping Forest to save this species from extinction.

We introduced a solar schools program aimed at allowing students to collect, analyse and interpret the benefits of solar power. Already 14 of the 17 solar schools are up and running around Queensland. This year we are expanding this program to some of the State's most remote areas by adding 10 new schools under the Solar Schools goes bush program.

We have promoted the use of ethanol blended petrol (e10) in Queensland. Following on from the e10 trial in Brisbane, the Queensland Government provided Caltex with \$30 000 for a e10 trial at five sites in Cairns. Caltex has now expanded this trial to Mareeba.

This year the Premier and I announced that a koala conservation plan would be prepared under the Nature Conservation Act. That work is under way.

And in March this year, Queensland government agencies dealt with a major oil spill at Lytton by cleaning up 1.9 million litres of light crude oil leaked into a 5 hectares of riverside land. Only the swift, coordinated response by government agencies and the company prevented any of the oil reaching the Brisbane River.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker I would like to pay tribute to the 2000 environmental volunteers that contribute to preserving and enhancing our world famous parks and forests across Queensland.