



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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BUNYA MOUNTAINS

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (2.21 a.m.): I rise to speak on the Bunya Mountains, or SF12 as it is known. The government's decision to classify the area as a national park was in direct opposition to that of the community consultation committee recommendation. The 10-member consultative committee voted nine to one in favour of having the tenure of the park classified as a conservation park. The committee consisted of a broad range of interested parties, including Aboriginal elders from the Kabi Kabi and Jarowair tribes, Agforce, bush walking recreation groups, the National History Association and various councils as stakeholders.

The government espouses how it values community consultation, but the truth more often than not is that the decisions were made long before community consultation took place but the government continued the illusion in going through the motions. I have to ask the government: on what grounds did the minister make the decision to go against the will and input of the community? I bring to the attention of the House the committee's rationale of why the Bunya should be tenured as a conservation park. Firstly, the Kabi Kabi people said in their submission their concerns are—

Respect for the land, looking after the land and respect for graziers. The graziers have worked with the old people and have taken on the care of caretakers, respected the sites of significance and have the same respect for the land as the Aboriginal people. Our thoughts are to let graziers continuing to use the land so knowledge is then passed down.

They said they were willing to work with the Parks and Wildlife Service and the graziers to manage the land, and if the graziers lose the land that will not help anyone. The Jarowair people were represented by Paddy Jerome, who submitted—

I am an elder with the Janowair Tribe. Although I am not initiated I hold the knowledge and think the lore should be maintained. I am trying to get this area to be my home for my people. As a chaplain in a prison I have seen my people degenerate and fill with self-denial. I know about Aboriginal and European culture and I am one of two people alive who speak my language. Every time I come up here I feel spiritual belonging. We want to win back the right to this place. This area should be respected. This is the soul of all Jarowair People. It has been the focus of our people for a long time.

What relevance was given to these two different Aboriginal views on the future of the Bunya Mountains? The response from Kevin Quinn of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service was that management will have to change, no matter what the tenure. He also said that there is a potential for cattle to impact on Aboriginal cultural sites of significance, and that is not what the Kabi Kabi people believe or said. He also stated that lantana is spreading regardless of the land management. Bravo! At last someone has recognised that, by locking up huge areas like the Bunyas, weeds and undergrowth build up. This must be accessible to free up the forest before they choke to death by noxious weeds.

Sadly, state forests and national parks are in the same boat. The government policy is to lock up forests, allow bushfire hazards to develop and if that does not get them let the weeds choke them to death. It is the minority groups in our community who appear to make the government's decisions. The bleeding hearts have the government's heart, not the Aboriginals, or more to the point the lobby power to make the government make irrational decisions that affect the majority. The minority groups in general have no idea of the history of the particular piece of land or how to manage it. It is the people who live and work the land who understand its volatile nature and treat it accordingly and with respect. There may not be many votes in that for the government, but if it appeals to the local minority groups it appeals to the government.