



Speech by

Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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MARINE PARKS BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.29 p.m.): I rise today to commend to the House the Marine Parks Bill 2004. The policy objective of the legislation is stated as providing for 'the protection and maintenance of the environment while allowing for its ecologically sustainable use'. This objective clearly outlines the commitment this government has for Queensland's marine parks and, as previously stated, this is another 2001 election campaign promise fulfilled. This bill is essential in addressing the modern changes our marine environment is experiencing. The current bill does not adequately promote modern, accepted standards for the management of marine parks and marine environment generally which are based on a multiple use, ecosystem, cooperative and participatory management approach.

I congratulate the minister on the bill and draw members' attention to several key features of the bill. The bill formally recognises the cooperative arrangements between the Queensland and Commonwealth governments in relation to the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is one of Queensland's greatest treasures, and everyone who lives near the reef—myself included—knows how important it is to have the federal and state governments working together to ensure the seamless management of the reef. Working together will provide certainty and consistency for users and, as far as practicably possible, will simplify the complex legislative environment created by uncertain boundaries and jurisdictions.

The Great Barrier Reef is an important part of tourism in Queensland, especially north Queensland. Tourism is the largest commercial activity in the Great Barrier Reef region. In 2004 there are approximately 730 permitted tourism operators and 1,500 vessels and aircraft that are permitted to operate in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

In Townsville many reefs like Kelso Reef, located on the outer of the Great Barrier Reef, are very popular with tourists. It is home to 1,500 species of colourful fish and 500 species of hard and soft corals. It is vital for the local and state economy for the reef to be protected and maintained. Through this amendment we are showing our commitment to working with the government for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef. However, it is also up to the federal government to reciprocate.

The previous bill did not have sufficient regard to Aboriginal tradition and Island custom in marine parks. As a government which created a new department dedicated to the policy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Queensland, it is essential that increased involvement be given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the general community in marine park planning and management. This bill now allows this. The bill also updates the requirements regarding reclamations. The assessment and management of reclamation in marine parks will be clarified involving early consideration of the potential impacts resulting from both the reclamation and excision of reclaimed areas, public scrutiny and, where these requirements are met, a non-parliamentary excision process for general use and habitat protection zones. This change is particularly relevant in Townsville. As members may recall, in 2001 the then Environment Minister sought and obtained a resolution of parliament for the revocation of an area of marine park at Nelly Bay on Magnetic Island. Reclamation has also been permitted in marine parks in a number of situations such as marina developments associated with tourism projects at Nelly Bay, Daydream Island in the Whitsundays and Laguna Quays north of Mackay.

Queensland has the highest proportion of marine parks in Australia, and the Marine Parks Bill 2004 is showing our commitment to their protection. I commend the bill to the House.