



Speech by

Michael Choi

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard Tuesday, 7 March 2006

RECREATION AREAS MANAGEMENT BILL

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (6.19 pm): I rise to give my support to the Recreation Areas Management Bill. In doing so, I congratulate the minister on introducing this bill on 29 November and also being in the chamber personally to see its safe passage through the House.

As suggested by the title, the Recreation Areas Management Bill will introduce uniform regulations in our recreation areas. The bill will provide legislative power for the improved management of five recreation areas in our state: Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Green Island, Bribie Island and Inskip peninsula. Further, the bill will repeal the current Recreation Areas Management Act 1988, which, in its current form, is not in line with management principles contained in more recent legislation.

As the minister commented, put simply, the current act and laws are out of date. This updated bill will bring the legislation into line with current drafting practices; enhance consistency with the Nature Conservation Act 1992 in relation to permits, offences and penalties; and provide more contemporary legislation in keeping with present standards and administrative practices in law enforcement and planning.

The intent of the 1988 legislation, which was to provide for coordinated recreation management across a wide range of land tenures, is to be maintained. For streamlining of operational procedures and minimising red tape, this bill will abolish the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and vest its responsibilities in the environment minister and the chief executive of the EPA.

In developing the bill, account was taken of government business and public comments on a discussion paper about the review of the recreation areas legislation. Numerous submissions received on the discussion paper from a wide range of community groups and individuals indicated broad community support for updating this legislation.

Ninety per cent of the land identified as Queensland's five recreation areas are national parks. Some of the critical areas included for management within the Recreation Areas Management Bill include our beautiful beaches, esplanades and coral reefs. Because these areas are not zoned as national park land, they are not identified specifically and covered by current legislation. These critical areas experience very high visitation and recreational use. As I said, currently they are outside the protected area estates and, therefore, they are not included for management purposes under the Nature Conservation Act. The primary purpose of this bill is to provide separate recreation areas management legislation for those specific areas.

The bill will cater for recreational activities on a variety of land tenures and will help ensure that the opportunities and experiences offered by recreation areas are maintained and properly managed for Queenslanders and visitors alike. This bill, with its updated provisions, is no surprise, because it is consistent and totally in line with this government's ongoing focus towards protecting, maintaining and promoting Queensland's magnificent and marvellous variety of natural environments.

This bill is about identifying more intrinsic and precise initiatives for better environmental management and protection in Queensland. In the 2005 budget, the Beattie Labor government appropriated \$272 million towards protecting Queensland's environment. Further, government was

responsible for adding more than 380,000 hectares of tropical rainforest to the state's national parks in the biggest expansion of protected areas in more than a decade. Environmental issues are important to us. We are aware that Queensland's parks, forests and recreation areas contain a unique cultural heritage, landscapes, ecosystems, plants and recreational activities that support this state's economy and quality of life.

The government fully understands the link between our tourism industry and our natural environment. We are keenly aware of the role that our recreation areas play in the local economies of many Queensland communities. It is a fact that better management and maintenance of these areas will enhance the visitor experience. Tourists will be encouraged to stay, to return and, most importantly, to spend more money, which ultimately means more jobs for the community. Increased visitation to recreation areas that are better managed will pump many additional dollars into regional communities and create further jobs.

Last year, the minister identified that Queensland's national parks generate almost \$1.2 billion each year for the Queensland economy as well as being directly responsible for the employment of 6,000 people and indirectly responsible for the employment of a further 15,000 people. Tourism operators, snack shop owners, and equipment hirers all operate associated businesses that are making money and employing locals in communities around and within recreation areas. We know that their livelihoods are dependent on the proper management of Queensland's special places. It is for those reasons that we apply ourselves to constantly review, define and update legislation to keep abreast of community trends and needs.

I have to express my disappointment that the opposition is not supporting this bill. As many members before me have said, this bill obviously is not perfect—no legislation is—but it is good for Queensland and it is good for Queenslanders. It is for that reason that I support this bill.