



Speech by

**Carolyn Male**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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## **REVOCATION OF STATE FOREST AREA**

**Ms MALE** (Glass House—ALP) (6.05 pm): I rise this afternoon to second the motion to revoke the setting apart and declaration of certain land as state forest under section 26(2) of the Forestry Act 1959. This proposal involves the revocation of 35 hectares from part of Beerwah State Forest, SF561, located directly south of Australia Zoo. The area proposed for revocation is exotic pine plantation with little conservation value and it should be noted that native title has been extinguished.

The revocation is required for the first stage of Australia Zoo's expansion project. The project has significant benefits to the state and has the support of all relevant state government agencies. In exchange, the zoo is transferring to the state a larger piece of land adjacent to Peachester State Forest, SF313, for forestry purposes. Forestry Plantation Queensland supports this proposal. The staged revocation and land swap has been requested by Australia Zoo as it requires the land dealing to be completed prior to commencement of negotiations for an Indigenous land use agreement for the remaining stages of the zoo expansion project.

I would just like to explain to the House the large investment that Australia Zoo is making to expand the facilities at the zoo. Steve and Terri Irwin's vision has always been to make Australia Zoo the biggest and best wildlife conservation facility in the entire world. It is a vision which I have been happy to support through my involvement with the Australia Zoo task force. It has been very exciting to watch the zoo's plans start to move ahead rapidly over the past couple of years.

It must be remembered that we are not just talking about a physical expansion. Australia Zoo currently employs 550 people and also utilises the services of many volunteers. Over the next five to 10 years this number is expected to grow to 2,000 staff. The economic boost to the local economy will be about \$90 million per year and this is seen by their 'buy local' policy which ensures that Beerwah and surrounding areas are assisted by the growth in visitor numbers at the zoo.

I think everyone here in the House would understand that Australia Zoo holds its head up high on the international tourism stage and is a premier destination for overseas visitors. Indeed they come to Australia to visit Australia Zoo and plan the rest of their trip around this. That is why it has been vital to have state government support to ensure that the expansion of Australia Zoo proceeds in a timely and efficient manner so that economic benefits can flow to the state, as well as more job opportunities for local residents. The Coordinator-General is providing direct assistance in negotiating with government departments and other agencies to facilitate these plans.

The total revocation is proposed to be actioned in stages with parcels of land being transferred to Australia Zoo as native title issues are resolved. The first stage of the total proposal involves revocation of approximately 30 hectares of land to the south of the zoo where native title consultation has been completed. This revocation includes the portion of state forest planned as the site for an Australia Zoo railway station as part of the CAMCOS routes from Beerwah to Caloundra. I will be really thrilled to see that CAMCOS line go through and, very importantly, to have an Australia Zoo train station. It is one of the major generators of car movements in that part of my electorate. If we can get some decent public transport that will get people directly from the coast to the zoo or from Brisbane to the zoo it will ease the

congestion on Steve Irwin Way and surrounding road networks. It will mean that we can get people there very quickly and very safely. I am looking forward to seeing that come to fruition.

After the completion of this first stage of 30 hectares, the remainder of the revocation proposal can be considered by government. The forest estate adjacent to the zoo which is part of that revocation proposal has some amazing plans that Australia Zoo is going to bring forward. This includes an open range safari experience like nothing else in the world, incorporating the landscapes and animals of the world's most famous wildlife and national park areas from places like Africa, South East Asia and North America. Before Steve Irwin's death he said—

I want people that come here from all over the world to not only be entertained and educated about wildlife but to go away excited enough to make a definite contribution to saving the world's endangered species.

**Mr Reeves** interjected.

**Ms MALE:** I take that interjection. It is a fabulous zoo. It is great place for the animals to be. Their conservation work is noted worldwide. It is an amazing facility.

**Mr Reeves** interjected.

**Ms MALE:** Indeed. It is very important to pass on that message of health and wellbeing. By everybody working together we can make this happen. Australia Zoo will work with both the traditional owners and the state to realise its dream and this will include preparing an Indigenous land use agreement.

Community consultation, as always, will be an important part of the zoo's plans to ensure that all relevant issues are identified and managed. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Natural Resources and Water and Forestry Plantations Queensland, along with the Caloundra City Council, have all responded favourably in progressing the revocation and expansion processes. I want to point out that Australia Zoo under the guidance of Forestry Plantations Queensland has purchased land of equivalent value to replace the land it is buying from the government. Australia Zoo will swap approximately 200 hectares of land that it owns at Peachester plus the cash difference in land values. The land will be used for forestry purposes which ensures that continued pine plantation production can continue, and that also means that jobs are protected within the local forestry industry.

I have had a long association with Australia Zoo as the elected state representative, and I can only speak highly of its dedication and commitment to its zoo facility, its staff, the community and the wider conservation movement. Steve and Terri's patronage of Wildlife Warriors Worldwide has seen the establishment of conservation programs both in Australia and overseas, as well as the Wildlife Hospital, which is located in the zoo's grounds. The complementary work that is done by the Warriors has cemented conservation ideals into a whole new generation of children. I know their commitment to conservation through exciting education, not to mention sheer hard work and large amounts of money, has set the benchmark for us all to try to reach. Steve, Terri, Joy, Frank, Wes and the entire Australia Zoo family have worked very hard over many years to establish Australia Zoo and all of its attractions. I am glad that the state government is able to help facilitate the continued growth of this marvellous facility. I commend the revocation to the House.