



Speech by
Gary Fenlon

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Wednesday, 8 August 2007

NATIONAL TREE DAY

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (11.04 pm): We are becoming more and more aware of our environment and this is no more true than on a day when we think of our environment—that is, National Tree Day on 29 July. I have coordinated a National Tree Day site in Greenslopes for the past three years. This has been in conjunction with the Norman Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee, Councillor Catherine Bermingham, various local sponsors and the local community.

In 2005 we struggled for volunteers and planted nearly 2,000 trees with just 40 people. In 2006, our numbers were up to 70 volunteers to help restore this area, but still for the amount of planting it was rather low. In 2007, the community support has been astounding. In fact, 270 local community members joined me in planting 3,200 trees, all accomplished in under two hours. This was a feat that has made our site one of the largest in Queensland. Their hard work was rewarded by the ACTU's Your Rights At Work Campaign, which kindly supplied a sausage sizzle for all volunteers afterwards.

Tree planting makes a positive difference to our environment. The awareness benefits reach into schools and communities, and it also helps our precious native animals and plants survive in Australia's diverse natural settings.

In particular, the Demonstration Catchment Project that has been home to National Tree Day in Greenslopes was just five years ago a dumping ground, covered in weeds and full of rubble and rubbish. This area is bordered by the south-east freeway and the Greenslopes Private Hospital, making it one of Brisbane's most urbanised creek catchments. Yet when you stand there today surrounded by the lush green forest, the noise of the traffic is drowned out by the call of bird life. It is home again to many species that have not been seen there for at least 30 years. It is hard to imagine how damaged this particular area was just five years ago.

A full restoration of this land—including the clearing of invasive plant species and rubbish, the planting of 50,000 native plant species and the reinstatement of the creek's banks—has seen what was an eyesore turned into one of inner Brisbane's most tranquil nature strips. It is a beautiful area. While most of this work has been carried out by a group of dedicated few, days like National Tree Day give an opportunity for the general community to connect with their local area and share the experience in restoring this catchment. The support is as diverse as the age groups of volunteers. From girl guides and cub groups to sponsoring companies and seniors clubs, rarely does one topic command such attention from all parts of our community as National Tree Day.

The overwhelming community support of this project and of National Tree Day will, I believe, create an ownership of this beautiful green space that will carry through for generations to come. My involvement in this project is a proud one indeed.