



Speech by

Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard Thursday, 8 February 2007

REVOCATION OF STATE FOREST AREA

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion for the revocation of 21.17 hectares of Beerburrum State Forest described as Lot 1 on SP185011, just south of the town of Beerburrum, by the Department of Transport for the Caboolture to Landsborough rail upgrade.

The rail upgrade and associated works are part of the larger South East Queensland Integrated Regional Transport Plan scheduled for completion by 2014. With the continued population growth in this part of the state it is prudent that the planned development of our infrastructure continue if this state's future is not to be further jeopardised by this government's demonstrated lack of strategic planning initiatives.

The area being excised from the Beerburrum East State Forest, SF611, is required for the first stage of the Caboolture to Beerburrum section of the rail line and is part of the earliest corridor works that are integral to the construction program. Land resumption for the project has commenced by the department of transport and is due to be finished by February 2007. Construction is due to start on the \$262.4 million 14-kilometre rail upgrade between Caboolture to Beerburrum early in 2007 and is due for completion by mid-2009.

Demand for services on this section of the railway is predicted to increase due to population increases on the Sunshine Coast and hinterland, increases in tourism related travel and growing demand for rail freight. For infrastructure to expand to cater for growth, there will obviously be subsequent impacts on the local environment and it is important that these impacts be appreciated and managed to achieve the best outcomes.

Expansion of essential facilities and the continued conservation of our environment are not mutually exclusive, as I am sure the minister agrees. While we do necessarily have to accept the associated impacts, we do not have to accept a lessening of environmental values as a result. Properly managed, such projects can proceed with due regard for the need for increased capacity in our transport network and the preservation and conservation of our native flora and fauna.

In fact, the Beerburrum to Landsborough Corridor report does identify several fauna species that are present in the area. According to the report, no plant species listed as threatened under the Nature Conservation Act or Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 have been identified within the proposed rail upgrade during the site surveys.

However, of the fauna species observed within the area, five are recognised as species of special conservation significance under Commonwealth and/or state government legislation. Three are listed as migratory species under the EPBC act and they are the rainbow bee-eater, the black-faced monarch and the spectacled monarch, while two are listed under the Nature Conservation Act.

Three species listed under the Nature Conservation Act, the grey goshawk, the koala and the glossy black cockatoo, and one under the EPBC act, the grey-headed flying-fox, are considered likely to occur due to the presence of suitable habitat and local records. Four priority species are considered possible occurrences.

Bearing in mind the sensitivity of threatened and endangered species, I would be interested to hear from the minister what effects are expected from not only the construction and commissioning of the new rail line, but also the effects of the resultant increased traffic on the line. Similarly, could the minister inform us of the procedures that will be used to monitor the effects of the project on the future viability of the affected species and their habitat and what, if any, contingency plans have been considered if it is found that there has been undue stress placed on either the different species or their habitats.

Fauna aside, the Beerburrum East State Forest is also the largest contiguous area of remnant vegetation to be impacted by the planned upgrade. The report states that it is expected that these impacts will create new edges along the alignment. Edge effects generally include weed invasion, changes to species composition and increased exposure to fire. Rehabilitation measures will need to be implemented to reduce edge effects of rail construction particularly in remnant vegetation and all watercourses.

Can the minister expand on just what remediation measures will be implemented, who will be responsible for them, who will monitor them and their expected duration? Is it expected that these measures will be a once-off event or, given the nature and tenacity of some of the hardier and more invasive weeds, ongoing for the foreseeable future?

We are all aware of the massive problems caused by the spread of weeds and pests and their propensity to compete with and outgrow native flora, threatened or not. A further problem could be the introduction of weeds not as yet present in the area brought in by vehicles and machinery during the construction phase. The health of our watercourses and the deleterious effects major earthworks can have on them is an ever-present worry. I would be interested in hearing what water quality monitoring will be undertaken during and immediately after completion of the upgrade until all new earthworks have been stabilised. I note that the report states that impacts on riparian vegetation is expected to be minor provided water quality and weed controls are implemented during and post construction.

I am satisfied that the upgrade itself will provide for the increased rail usage expected for the line in the future and, subject to the answers to the previous queries, that all the necessary planning, consultation and monitoring phases are in place and will be sufficient to minimise as much as possible any negative impacts on the immediate environment.