



Speech by

Hon. Kate Jones

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard Thursday, 18 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Conservation Agreements

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (10.13 am): The Bligh government has made a commitment to deliver 20 million hectares of protected area across Queensland by 2020. It is about protecting our abundant natural heritage, our unique ecosystems and the vulnerable native wildlife which depends on them. I am happy to announce that we have secured more land to reach this target. The Bligh government has already made significant increases to our national park estate, which now stands at nearly eight million hectares. Today I advise that I have signed off on 31 new conservation agreements with graziers and landholders under the Nature Refuge Program, bringing Queensland's total number of refuges to 338. These agreements are a significant part of our protection measures. They join the dots between our national parks, they provide wildlife corridors and they help give our native species a vital lifeline to combat the effects of climate change.

The latest agreements cover 20,000 new hectares and protect a number of vulnerable and endangered species, including the Fleay's barred frog, the glossy black cockatoo and the Albert's lyrebird. Nature refuges now cover more than three-quarters of a million hectares of Queensland and form a significant part of our protected area estate. They include a nationally important wetland and springs in the Great Artesian Basin, Australia's great hidden resource which extends across much of eastern Australia. They include important corridors such as the Barrine Park Nature Refuge, which connects the Atherton Tablelands' iconic Lake Barrine rainforest to the expansive World Heritage area to the east.

The nature refuge's owner, Philip and Carolyn Emms, have planted around 10,000 trees in the corridor and aim to fully restore this area over time. I congratulate the Emms, graziers and all other landholders who have made a contribution to these 31 new nature refuges. I would also like to acknowledge the natural resource management groups across the state and AgForce, who have worked with us to make this strategy such a success.