Speech by

Hon. Kate Jones

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ClimateQ

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (9.51 am): As the Premier outlined earlier, ClimateQ is an all-encompassing vehicle for reform and transition toward a low-carbon future in Queensland. In our strategy is the potential for Queensland to hone its environmental qualities and characteristics to store significant amounts of carbon.

Since the industrial revolution approximately a quarter of all human induced greenhouse gas emissions have resulted from the clearing of forests, the conversion of grasslands to cropping and the loss of soil carbon from continual tillage of crop lands. In his 2008 review of climate change, Professor Ross Garnaut identified that the Australian rural landscape could be utilised to capture significant quantities of the country's greenhouse gas emissions in a process known as biosequestration.

To position Queensland to take advantage of any biosequestration opportunities, the Premier's Council on Climate Change commissioned the CSIRO to undertake a scientific assessment of the carbon biosequestration potential of Queensland land use. I table a copy of that report for the information of members.

Tabled paper: Report by CSIRO titled 'Submission to Premier's Council on Climate Change, restricted distribution' [746].

This Australian-first study provides a key input into the Commonwealth government's negotiations on the treatment of land use in the new international climate change framework to be determined in Copenhagen later this year.

The report from the CSIRO released today indicates that Queensland's rural lands have the potential to store large amounts of additional carbon. While a range of further work is required to examine the policy issues involved, it is clear from the report that Queensland's rural lands have a significant potential to act as carbon sinks for the next 40 to 50 years. Changed forestry activities including new plantings, reduced logging and land clearing as well as managed regrowth have the greatest potential to provide carbon sinks.

Putting a value on this biosequestration in Queensland could breathe new life into the restoration of our landscape and could generate another source of income for our farmers. The report found that other land uses, such as the production of feedstock for biofuels and biochar and managed fire regimes in savannah grasslands, may possibly deliver further emission reductions once technical and market issues are resolved.

However, other land use options, including restoring degraded grazing lands and reducing the level of methane emitted by livestock, are likely to require significant investment to overcome technical barriers. In looking at the various options, the report says policy makers will need to weigh up the benefits and trade-offs in areas such as carbon storage, food production, biodiversity conservation, water use and environmental health. In addition, a concerted effort is required to overcome technical, policy and management barriers.

While on balance the findings are positive, they do not displace the responsibility we all have for reducing emissions at their source in all sectors. The report addresses the longer term solutions which can provide a broader emissions reduction approach over coming decades thereby lowering the costs to the economy and community.

This report highlights the critical role that rural land use can play in Queensland's climate change response, and the key national role that Queensland can play in moves towards combating climate change. Sure, Queensland has some enormous challenges ahead, but we also have a number of untapped opportunities to capitalise on as this report demonstrates. The report is now available on my department's website. I refer all members who have expressed interest in it this morning—and I thank them for their bipartisan support—to the website www.derm.qld.gov.au.