



Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Thursday, 25 November 2010

MOTION: REVOCATION OF STATE FOREST AREAS

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (10.07 pm): British author L. P. Hartley opened his best known work, *The Go-Between*, with the lines—

The past is a foreign country: They do things differently there.

Tonight we debate the revocation of a 1977 decision to protect 457,000 hectares of land for conservation on Cape York. Hartley is right: the past is a foreign country; they did do things differently there for any number of justifiable reasons that only those contemporary to the times know best—good reasons and bad reasons. I will return to the past shortly, but let me focus initially on the present and on this revocation, specifically the LNP's position with regard to it.

The LNP, as outlined eruditely by the shadow minister, the honourable member for Noosa, is determined to protect the environment and our national park estate. The LNP stands for Indigenous land rights, the LNP stands for Indigenous advancement, and there is example after example of where we have done so, particularly in the political realm. Having visited the Aboriginal community of Cherbourg numerous times in my former role with Child Safety, I am committed and passionate about Indigenous advancement. I readily acknowledge that I do not have the answers, but I hope that the good people of the electorate of Glass House will give me the time to work with local and Queensland's Indigenous people to unearth the answers and deliver real outcomes for them and their communities.

The LNP also supports native title but a native title that allows Indigenous Australians to own their own home and be employed in their own community.

As I said, before concluding I do want to touch on one part of the past, again raised by the shadow minister. Clearly, the decision made in 1977 had considerable merit. Through advice at the time from a senior ecologist and scientifically based assessment, the government chose to protect 457 hectares through the Nature Conservation Act. The fact that this revocation seeks to revoke the protection of only 75,000 hectares suggests that the original decision, taken because of the high conservation value of the area, was very, very close to the mark. When we consider that 32,000 hectares of this revoked parcel of land will remain a nature refuge, we again must highlight clearly that there was much merit in the original decision.

That said, I do congratulate the Wik Mungkan people. This is their day. This is a great outcome for them. As the shadow minister said, it is a day to rejoice and we share your joy. I, too, wish you all the best in your ongoing negotiations with the government on the use of your land, but be wary and be cautious. There are few Queenslanders left who trust this Bligh Labor government to keep its word. Today, though, is a day for you to celebrate.