



Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Thursday, 7 April 2011

NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY BILL

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (3.45 pm): I, too, rise to address the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Bill 2011. As stated by the shadow minister, the member for Bundaberg, the LNP will not be supporting this bill. Let me again tell members why: we do not support hastily concocted, poorly conceived and atrociously consulted Greens preference-grabbing legislation that will not guarantee environmental protection but instead will severely disadvantage the local community.

Let me be clear in case those opposite try to twist our position: the LNP supports the development of national parks. I am on the record numerous times calling for the expansion of national parks in the electorate of Glass House. I commended the minister and the government on the expansion of the Glass House Mountains National Park and the establishment of the new Pumicestone National Park. I would welcome the minister to Glass House any day and I will happily show her where I see not only wonderful opportunities to enhance the existing national parks in Glass House but also opportunities to link up the D'Aguilar National Park with the Glass House Mountains National Park and with the Blackall Range national parks like Maleny, Kondalilla and Conondale.

Yesterday the minister announced the protection, in partnership with a local landowner, of a strategic koala habitat adjacent to the Maleny National Park on the Curramore plateau. The new Jilumbar Koala Nature Refuge, some 13.4 hectares in size, is a great initiative and one that has my full support. In fact, I hope that we see more arrangements like this one because, as I hope the minister is aware, koalas are not sedentary marsupials; they are roamers. They need to move around, particularly during the breeding season, to ensure the survival of the species. That is yet another reason I would love to discuss nature corridor protection across Glass House with the minister.

The LNP supports the expansion of national parks on North Stradbroke Island. Like many residents of South-East Queensland, I have grown up holidaying on the island. The protection of the natural environment of the island is a sensible and worthy goal, but the LNP supports doing so in a well-planned and consultative manner that ensures that the views of all residents are considered and that they are not economically disadvantaged.

The LNP also supports the proper and consistent management of our state's national parks. The LNP has serious concerns that those opposite do not, and we have good reason to doubt both their ability and their willingness to truly manage and protect our natural assets. We have proof: their own record. The Bligh Labor government's record of managing our most precious natural and cultural assets is appalling. In his report to parliament No. 9 for 2010 the Auditor-General states—

... the department—

that is, the Department of Environment and Resource Management—

has developed park management plans for only 98 of the 576 (17 per cent) protected areas for which they are required. The Act requires the plans to identify the key natural and cultural values, and strategies for day-to-day and long-term management to protect these values. The Act also states that plans should be prepared as soon as practicable after the dedication of a protected area. The

preparation of statutory park management plans can be a lengthy process, as it includes significant stakeholder consultation. The department is currently reviewing the process for developing park management plans and advised that 12 plans are due to be finalised by the end of 2010 and a further 40 plans are being developed.

In my view the absence of park management plans for most national parks and protected areas creates a risk for the department. Without approved park management plans, conservation activities undertaken in the protected area estate may be insufficient, or be inconsistently applied over the longer term. The relatively small number of completed park management plans reduces the department's capacity to measure its success and accurately report its findings to Parliament and other key stakeholders.

I would add that perhaps the biggest of those key stakeholders are the people of Queensland. Do not take the LNP's word for it. The Auditor-General has condemned this government's pathetic efforts at managing national parks. This government is quick off the mark when it comes to declaring new national parks and expanding national parks, but it drags the chain when it comes to managing these new and expanded assets. The LNP has serious reservations that this, yet another hastily prepared piece of legislation declaring a dramatic increase in the size of the national park assets on North Stradbroke Island, will not be complemented with true environmental protection, protection that only comes when a park management plan is put in place. As the Auditor-General says, in the absence of such a plan, conservation activities undertaken in the protected area estate may be insufficient or be inconsistently applied over the longer term.

The Auditor-General also makes reference to the importance of significant stakeholder consultation. The LNP supports broad and detailed community consultation when it comes to legislation such as this—consultation that offers all sectors of a community a seat at the table; consultation that is about getting the right outcome, not about securing Greens preferences at the next election. As the member for Cleveland has so poignantly portrayed, this government, in its haste to rush this legislation into this House, failed to consult with at least one key stakeholder, the mining company. Equally concerning is its neglect of established protocols when it comes to consulting with the local Indigenous elders and the local Indigenous community. Clearly the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has the same concerns. Obviously it received sufficient evidence to question the minister on the process that was followed. I read from the latest *Legislation Alert* where the committee states—

34. The explanatory notes state (at 5 and 8):

The land tenure model that the Bill establishes for the NSI Region is based on the Cape York model, which has the endorsement of all Cape York stakeholders, and could not be established other than by legislation.

In February 2011, the Quandamooka People were consulted on an exposure draft of the provisions of the Bill that amend the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

No significant issues were raised by the Quandamooka People in relation to the exposure draft of the Bill.

35. The committee invites the minister to provide further information about the consistency of part 4 with Aboriginal tradition and Island custom including:

- who was consulted;
- who made the decision as to who should be consulted;
- matters about which consultation was undertaken; and
- the extent of consultation undertaken.

A throwaway line in the explanatory notes suggesting that in February of this year the Quandamooka people were consulted and no significant issues were raised does not cut it. Based on a meeting held last week, it is now common knowledge that the government did not follow the correct protocols in consulting with the Quandamooka people. Given that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee will not receive the minister's response before the conclusion of this debate, I ask the minister: who was consulted, who made the decision as to who should be consulted, what matters were discussed as part of the consultation and what was the extent of the consultation? Aboriginal tradition and island custom is a serious matter. The LNP has very serious concerns that it has not been given due consideration in the development of this legislation.

The LNP supports strong and vibrant local economies so it is also very concerned about the economic ramifications this bill presents for the residents of North Stradbroke Island. As eruditely elaborated by the member for Cleveland, the passing of this bill will seriously impact on the livelihoods of up to 650 workers and their families. These individuals are already finding that the uncertainty created by this government and this bill is having unwelcome implications on their ability to secure finance. It is creating uncertainty in transport, with the local ferry company exploring alternative options for its fleet. It is all well and good to spruik the benefits of ecotourism—yes, it is an increasingly profitable niche industry—but let us get serious. It will never give the day-to-day employment certainty to workers on North Stradbroke Island that the mine does. Just ask the many ecotourism based companies in my electorate of Glass House. When the tourism market goes south so does the ecotourism market and so do permanent and casual jobs. There is no security and there is even less given that the government will not release a detailed economic management plan for the island. As the member for Cleveland has advised, even

Brisbane Marketing acknowledges the island will need five Tangaloomas in place before the mining ceases to offset the loss of the economic benefit.

The lack of consideration to the economic disadvantage this legislation creates has also been identified by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I again refer to the *Legislation Alert* at paragraphs 19 and 20—

The committee notes that this legislation may impose appreciable economic and social costs on the community of North Stradbroke Island. A regulatory impact statement was not prepared for the bill. If a regulatory impact statement was prepared, consistent with the usual approach set out in section 44(g) of the *Statutory Instruments Act* for subordinate legislation and the administrative Regulatory Assessment Statement system, the community would have had an opportunity to discuss the benefits and costs to the community and the extent to which they can be quantified.

The issue of a regulatory impact statement was also addressed in the submission of the Queensland Resources Council received by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. Quite simply, the government wants to rush this through. It does not want to do the work that is required to ensure a truly balanced approach to expanding national parks on the island. They just want to secure Greens preferences to save their own political skins and that of the member for Ashgrove in particular.

The LNP supports the expansion of national parks in this great state of Queensland. The LNP supports the true environmental protection of these natural and cultural assets by the development of considered and detailed park management plans. The LNP supports true consultation with all stakeholders in the development of these plans and the LNP supports local economic development. Yes, this bill expands the state's national park assets, but the fact that this bill does not ensure real environmental protection, the fact that this bill has not been prepared in consultation with all stakeholders and the fact that this bill has not given serious consideration to the economic consequences on the local community leaves the LNP with no option but to not support the legislation before the House.