




Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Thursday, 1 December 2011

MOTION: REVOCATION OF STATE FOREST AREAS

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (6.08 pm): I rise to speak to the revocation of a three-hectare portion of the Main Range National Park to allow for the realignment of the Cunningham Highway as proposed by the Minister for Environment on 25 October this year. Realignment of the highway is required due to major damage and land slippage, as the minister just explained, sustained on steep sections during the previous wet season. I have been informed that DTMR has advised that repair to that particular part of the existing highway is not feasible.

As the Cunningham Highway is a major link between Brisbane and pastoral communities in south-western Queensland and a key freight route to all destinations to the south, further deterioration of the highway would result in loss of public access, public safety issues and economic impacts for the region, state and nation. As such, while any revocation of national park should be considered a last resort, the LNP will not be opposing this revocation. The realignment will provide the users of this key piece of infrastructure with improved certainty and safety when using the Cunningham Highway during and following extreme weather events. However, it is important that during the realignment reconstruction period safe access is maintained for this crucial east-west connection between Ipswich and Warwick for industry, tourism, businesses and the community.

Roadworks and heavy machinery have become something of a permanent fixture at Cunningham's Gap over the past eight months, not unlike many roads in my electorate, and it seems motorists should not expect them gone any time soon. The Cunningham's Gap reconstruction program is underway, but completion time lines have been blown out, with new signage in place on the highway offering a vague mid-2012 completion date I suspect partly because of this necessary revocation this evening.

I am concerned about these reconstruction delays at Cunningham's Gap as the current situation is not adequate for the thousand trucks a day going through the gap on the Brisbane-Sydney and Brisbane-Melbourne run. There are serious delays in moving between Brisbane, up into the Southern Downs and out through Goondiwindi. We need to get this vital trade and tourism link back on track and we need to provide safe passage for the long-suffering locals.

It is noticeable that the revocation section for the national park has not been undertaken in time to enable commencement of work on the realignment project before the start of the wet season. I hope this delay was because the government was considering all other options, as the minister suggested, and not because of unnecessary bureaucratic meddling. I was going to ask the minister to outline any attempts to identify a suitable offset, but I have noted that DTMR will be providing a cash offset on the basis that they were unable to identify any suitable land offset in the neighbouring vicinity and that cash offset will be used to purchase an equal amount of protected estate. As I said, the LNP will not be opposing this revocation.