




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.09 pm): I rise to speak to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I belong to Katter's Australian Party, the KAP. We consider ourselves a freedom party. We certainly endorse more open use of national parks by all Queenslanders. Core value No. 11 of our party is—

Vacant land such as State Forest and some unallocated lands and seas now designated as 'off-limits' are to be owned and accessible by the people. They are not the exclusive domain of the 'Crown'.

It is our hope that this legislation will open up national parks to more people, not just an elite few. Access to parks is a very relevant issue in my electorate, where we are not talking about 5,000 or 20,000 acres of pristine rainforests. Our national parks can often cover half a million acres and can be a headache for their neighbours. Quite often, the private adjoining owners try to quell the problems that are cultivated on the national park estate, which can be a nursery for weeds and feral animals. Very often they are in poorer condition, in terms of biodiversity, than the land of the responsible private landholder next door. Therefore, we are not comparing apples with apples. In many cases, the parks are a burden.

Parks can diminish the rates base for councils. As I said, the parks can be a nursery for weeds and feral animals. They are a large cost burden to the government and evidently the asset base is becoming large and unwieldy with proper management becoming more and more difficult. I have friends who are very strong sympathisers of the environmental cause. Often they argue with me in defence of the use of parks, but they will admit that many of the parks in my area are now in worse condition than when they were privately owned and under average standard management.

I do get confused when we refer to some of the parks and the window of time in which they are to be preserved, because many are to be taken back to their natural state. It was with great interest that I learned that in one park in my electorate they have turned the artificial waters back on. Initially, they were turned off to turn the park back to its natural state. I can only conclude that the decision was made that the biodiversity was enhanced by having the artificial waters in place, that is, it was better when the artificial waters were turned on. That is saying that man's disturbance of this land enhanced the environment. In acknowledging that, my attitude towards some of the parks, particularly in the western areas, is very cynical.

Getting back to the bill, we agree with the Ergon submission that these amendments will make it easier for it to administer its services in national parks, freeing up red tape and causing fewer time delays. We agree with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council that changes to the Nature Conservation Act enabling authorisation of privately operated ecotourism facilities in national parks, including Indigenous joint management areas, will only benefit tourism in Queensland. We are supportive of that. I have enjoyed the accommodation at Spicers resorts and other such resorts. Such resorts could potentially open up in those areas and that would be a benefit to the state. However, it is

concerning that having such uses in parks could increase the threat of weeds. That issue will require close monitoring as the impact of the bill rolls out.

It is our hope that under this amended legislation the Indigenous management of ecotourism facilities in parks, such as Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land, will go a long way towards self-determination for our first Australians. Whilst also I am critical of some aspect of the CSG industry, I acknowledge that part of the bill serves a purpose in enabling easier traversing of parks and access to their infrastructure. I support the right of industry to have the opportunity that is offered by this bill. On that basis, I will support the bill.