




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (5.27 pm): I rise today to make a contribution to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, introduced by my colleague Minister Dickson. What a breath of fresh air this legislation is for the silent majority whom I represent in the tiny embattled village of Springbrook, which is located in the Gold Coast hinterland in my electorate. It may be a small village—and getting smaller all of the time and threatened with extinction—but its 650 residents have big hearts and they are fighting back. Their beloved village has been disappearing before their eyes, all because of a 2006 secret grubby deal when Peter Beattie sold out the local residents for a preference deal with the Greens, under the spectral shadow of Aila Keto and ARCS.

To seal the deal with the Greens, around \$40 million of taxpayers' money was spent supposedly on rainforest restoration. But it has not been used to buy rainforest land but to buy out land used for homes, farms and businesses. To illustrate this madness, houses bought by the state, including historical homesteads, have since been demolished or left to slowly rot, waiting to be reclaimed by the rainforest.

According to a report in 2008, there has been an unknown number of plant extinctions in the past 100 years in Springbrook which may have irreversibly changed the environment, making restoration impossible. The report goes further, saying that the natural pollinators and dispersers may have disappeared and that the overall genetic diversity could have fallen below critical levels. Indeed, even Aila Keto herself, from the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, was quoted in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* as saying, 'It is impossible to know if complete restoration is possible.'

So why has all of this taxpayer money been spent when there is little chance of restoration? Why has this tiny community been singled out and sold out when it is not going to make much difference to the environment? This is yet another example of Labor and the Greens doing secret, grubby deals to the detriment of taxpayers.

Under an LNP government, national parks will be better managed with easier access for visitors and they will deliver real conservation benefits. This will benefit Gold Coast hinterland towns such as Springbrook, which relies on nature based tourism while other businesses in the township have been rightly concerned about the declining number of visitors to the area as a result of the Beattie-Bligh government's \$40 million land grab, which was done under a cloud of secrecy and started as far back as 2005.

The Labor Party has already given \$40 million of our hard-earned taxpayers' money to a group, ARCS, that cannot finalise a plan and took from 2008 until 2011 to produce even one report and thus far has shown no evidence of environmental outcomes, despite signing a restoration agreement in August 2008.

Labor dropped the ball in managing our parks, as was mentioned by my colleague, with the Auditor-General finding back in 2010 that just 17 per cent of protected areas have management plans. This report highlighted what we already knew: there was no plan for Springbrook and ARCS

had no accountability to the government or to the people of Queensland, despite the provisions dictated in the restoration agreement. Unlike Labor, the LNP is committed to delivering green outcomes, not chasing Greens preferences.

Springbrook is a small but very passionate community. Residents vented their anger over the demolition of 13 homes in the hinterland community that should have been heritage listed, but they were left with no resolution in sight. However, they were shocked to discover that all that was left of the traditional farmhouse built by the Hardy family in the early 1900s was debris. The destruction of Kanimbla brought some long-term residents to tears.

The Health and Community Services Committee, of which I am now a part, received a submission from the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society. It would be remiss of me not to comment on the contribution from ARCS. I table the submission.

Tabled paper: Submission from the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society to the Health and Community Services Committee regarding the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 [2465].

First can I say that as the member for Mudgeeraba I have never had the opportunity to meet with Ms Keto. In fact, at one stage I actually had to send Channel 9 Gold Coast News and Tom Vergotis down her driveway because she would not come and speak to anybody. I have been asking questions about ARCS since 2005, so we are now eight years down the track and the elusive Aila Keto is yet to meet with me. I wonder if she would have turned up to speak to her submission before the committee if she knew I was going to be there. We will never know now. I do, however, note her comments on the social impacts of ecotourism in Springbrook. She states—

Whatever such a framework might be, the fact remains that there will be a private enclave within a national park that is the exclusive domain of paying guests of the facility and from which the general public who own the park are excluded.

Guess what? Thanks to her spending frenzy in Springbrook, just about every property on Repeater Station Road was bought up and, indeed, Aila Keto is the one who has the private enclave as it is one of only a few houses left on Repeater Station Road which has pristine, multimillion-dollar views of the heritage listed national park.

I move on to the economic impacts raised in her submission. I really had to try not to splutter over my Corn Flakes on this one! It states—

A tourism facility within a national park will have a commercial advantage over nearby accommodation facilities, outside the national park, with which they will directly compete. This could cause closure of such accommodation businesses and produce an overall reduction in tourism locally with a flow-on impact on other businesses dependent on tourism.

I can tell you categorically that the cause of the economic impacts on Springbrook tourism and businesses is a direct result of ARCS, Aila Keto and her mismanagement and their reckless disregard for others. This is nothing more than the pot calling the kettle black. ARCS already has a commercial advantage in Springbrook, as the minister mentioned, over businesses such as the Mouses House because it does not have any overheads and it pays peppercorn rents.

This legislation will open up Springbrook for everyone. It will enable people to get up to Springbrook, and no gates will be locked under this government. This is a great piece of legislation. I also look forward to working with the Health and Community Services Committee so we can redress the hysteria of the Greens and Labor over Springbrook. The hysteria continues, with Aila Keto and the Greens making preposterous claims about logging in Springbrook. I table a recent article from the *Courier-Mail* titled 'Conservationists say Springbrook in the firing line as the State Government prepares to open national parks to logging'.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 16 April 2013, titled 'Conservationists say Springbrook in the firing line as the State Government prepares to open national parks to logging' [2466].

I am sure the hysteria will commence yet again about a cableway in Springbrook. As the local member I have always said that we would not revisit the former plan of 2001 but we will look at all options for sustainable ecotourism and we will make sure proper processes and environmental impact studies stack up. I welcome suggestions to the draft plan released this week by the minister. I table for the benefit of the House comments made this morning in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* by Minister Stuckey in an article titled 'Ecotourism plan may allow a cableway' so that the gangrenes up in Springbrook cannot run off and put words in the LNP's mouth and create their usual mischief and misrepresentation.

Tabled paper: Online article, dated 18 April 2013, from goldcoast.com.au website, titled 'Ecotourism plan may allow a cableway' [2467].

I wholeheartedly support this legislation and the draft ecotourism plan, and I encourage everyone who wants to reopen Springbrook to contribute to a plan for environmentally sustainable ecotourism in what is one of Queensland's great wonders, Springbrook. I commend the bill to the House.