




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 16 October 2013

**NATURE CONSERVATION (PROTECTED PLANTS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (6.13 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Nature Conservation (Protected Plants) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. First, I acknowledge the minister and his actions. The way our protected plants framework is managed, as an important area of legislation, is something that needed to be addressed. The goals of the legislation, including the goal to increase efficiency and reduce the regulatory and administrative burden on the community, business and government, are admirable.

To illustrate the current inefficiencies—a legacy of the previous government—I would like to relay a practical application of this legislation that occurred in my electorate in 2010. The residents of Springbrook are regularly a focus of my speeches in this place. It is not coincidental: this community has suffered more than any other in the electorate as a result of, we well know, grubby deals, poorly thought out legislation and a lack of compassion for their future by the previous government. Being a relatively remote community, in comparison to the suburban bulk of the rest of my electorate, damage to, and delays in the repair of, one of the few access points to the mountain can have a dramatic effect.

In 2010 Springbrook Road required some substantial repairs. Springbrook Road, of course, is a heritage listed road and is a vital piece of transport infrastructure for the Springbrook community. Indeed, even in its current state, much improved on 2010, it really should be much further improved in the interests of that community. There were potholes, surface areas were poor, and Transport and Main Roads were committed to carry out repairs. TMR got to work but then mysteriously stopped. In the meantime, substantial rains had caused the problems to be exacerbated, creating an unsafe road surface for locals and tourists alike. In fact, I think the *Gold Coast Bulletin* likened it to the Kokoda Track. I am sure that the difficulties experienced by tourists did not bother the previous government too much. They had already spent nearly \$40 million in the previous couple of years trying to make Springbrook less attractive for visitors in the name of environmental protection.

Of course, I have touched on these issues before—the shady deals, the lack of transparency, the blatant disregard for the livelihoods of Springbrook based businesspeople. So why was construction vital to community safety placed on hold? TMR told me that it was partly the rain but also due to environmental concerns. The nature of these environmental concerns soon became evident. It is my understanding that the concerns had their root in a single phone call. Endangered plant species which were not there the night before had suddenly been discovered. They were under threat. They had to be protected at all costs. Interestingly enough, an email from Transport and Main Roads at the time had a portion redacted. The part of the email that was redacted was that Aila Keto had made one phone call to the director-general of Transport and Main Roads and had my \$400,000 worth of roadworks stopped because of an endangered species, which apparently she can see through binoculars all the way from Brisbane—

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. These are unsubstantiated slurs and allegations against a member of the public which the member should substantiate if—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. The member for South Brisbane will take her seat.

Ms BATES: If the member for South Brisbane went back and looked at *Hansard* she would see that that email was actually tabled in the House a number of years ago.

TMR was obligated to consult with the then department of environment and resource management. DERM—the ‘department of no’—commenced their development of a vegetation management plan. Construction was shut down as the bureaucracy went through the motions, which they were obligated to do. The community were outraged, and they certainly expressed their feelings to their local member. Concerns raised included reduced access for emergency services, threat of landslides and threat of fatal car accidents.

This so-called endangered plant life was subsequently found to be common in the area. However, months had passed when the only species in danger was the Springbrook motorist. It is only by chance that no-one was killed while the roadworks were put on hold and the primary entry and exit point to the mountain was reduced to a potential deathtrap.

Red-tape reduction in relation to environmental protection has a demonstrable effect on communities like Springbrook. The previous example is but one demonstration of how poor practice can have a real and detrimental effect. I congratulate the minister for what he has been doing up in Springbrook. He has been actively listening to the concerns of residents of Springbrook, as has the Minister for Natural Parks, unlike the former minister for the ‘department of no’, ‘Carbon’ Kate.