




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.16 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013. This bill delivers on the Newman government's commitment to cut red tape and to ensure our national parks are effectively managed so that they are available for all Queenslanders and visitors to enjoy. This bill is about streamlining processes and embracing common sense in relation to management of protected areas in our state, and it is about providing better opportunities for Queenslanders and visitors to our state to experience our incredible national parks.

Key to this bill is the broadening of the object of the Nature Conservation Act to recognise that through protecting our protected areas we can achieve a range of outcomes for Queenslanders and visitors, not just nature conservation. This is a policy area which I have had a very strong interest in and one that has an enormous effect on not only our parks but also their surrounding areas. Springbrook National Park is within my electorate of Mudgeeraba. The Springbrook economy relies on the national park to bring tourists to their community and to their businesses. When I have visited Springbrook residents and have outlined the crux of this bill, there has been genuine excitement on the part of the residents. 'Finally, government is acting with people like us in mind rather than targeting us for extinction,' is a common phrase.

Springbrook residents have had much to fear from governments in the past, and I can assure the residents of Springbrook: this era is now over. You are no longer targeted and you are no longer under threat. I know that the minister is well aware of the problems they have faced in the wake of the \$40 million buy-up orchestrated by the previous government in cahoots with ARCS and Aila Keto under the guise of environmental protection. I know that the minister continues to work to bring the details of this plan to light, not only because it is right to do so and not only because it should be brought to light if our government is truly committed to open and accountable government but also because the residents of Springbrook have a right to know.

Opening up national parks to ecotourism allows the Springbrook community to share in the industry that is key to the economy that surrounds it. Tourism is at the heart of the Gold Coast economy, and communities like Springbrook should be able to share in that. Of course, promotion of visitation to our national parks not only adds to the experience for our visitors but also helps to support the communities that surround the parks. Whilst the clear goal of some is to put a big gate on Springbrook Road, lock it and throw away the key, we acknowledge that by allowing people to experience the amazing resource that is Springbrook National Park we secure its future and ensure the passion many have for its protection spreads throughout the broader community. Our national parks are an extraordinary asset that deserve our protection. The more people can experience them, the more likely they are to get behind their protection.

I have outlined in this place before the injustices done to the Springbrook community. The previous government believed that business, tourism and—seemingly—visitors were not compatible with the protection of our national parks. We believe that environmental protection need not operate by putting our national parks under lock and key. There has always been the green behind the gold, but it is easy for visitors to have in their minds that the Gold Coast represents only theme parks and beaches and forget about our stunning natural assets just a little bit to the west. I urge visitors to the Gold Coast and Gold Coasters alike to visit our national parks, especially the extraordinary Springbrook National Park, and experience something truly special.

This bill introduces new civil immunity provisions. These are simply common sense and sit comfortably within the concept of personal responsibility. There are multiple changes to the way we will streamline our national parks within this bill. The idea that the majority of our national parks have had no management plan in place is ridiculous. It is not only environmentally irresponsible but entirely economically irresponsible. The Queensland state government contributed close to \$1.5 million to the management of Springbrook National Park last financial year alone through salaries and operating costs, capital works and maintenance. I imagine that there are similar outlays on our national parks throughout the state. The Auditor-General's report in 2010 found that the former government had just 17 per cent of the management plans for protected areas in place as required by the Nature Conservation Act. It would have taken supposedly 30 years and \$60 million to complete them all. The introduction of management statements in the streamlining of management plans where more detailed planning is required as an alternative to the inefficient and costly processes currently in place will ensure that each national park is effectively managed.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to ensure that at this point certain things are put on the record—things like there will be no mining and there will be no logging or hunting in Springbrook National Park. There is no lack of clarity behind this point. As the local member I would not support it, the minister does not support it and the department does not support it. At a public hearing recently—and residents were invited to read the transcript—I asked Mr Jason Jacobi, Acting Deputy Director-General of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the following—

Just for the benefit of the hysterics on Springbrook Mountain—particularly those who do not live there, such as Gecko—I have consistently said that in the Springbrook World Heritage area there will be no logging, and there has not been any in Springbrook for over 30 years. There is no cattle grazing there, and the minister took action earlier this year for those areas where cattle needed to have some grazing because of drought. We have also had the issue of the threat of CSG mining, and my understanding is there is no CSG on Springbrook Mountain anyway. Would you be able to just definitively say that none of those activities will be occurring on Springbrook Mountain?

Mr Jacobi replied—

I can conclusively confirm that there is no intention for logging, grazing or mining on Springbrook National Park.

So those trying to make out that the government does not strongly support the protection of our national parks are being dishonest. Trying to pull the wool over the eyes of residents may serve the purpose of some in the short term—those who peddle in untruths to serve their own purposes—but the residents of Springbrook are the most politically engaged I have ever encountered and will not readily forgive the dissemination of lies and exaggeration from anyone. When the sky fails to fall in you will be exposed and your integrity will forever be damaged in their eyes. I commend the bill to the House.