




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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## **NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (6.12 pm): In speaking to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I congratulate the minister. I believe that this is good legislation and I support its objectives in general, although I notice that a number of elements are missing from it. During the last election, the LNP promised to provide to areas of North Queensland information through educational pamphlets to clarify the rules around allowing recreational activities such as off-road vehicle access and special hunting activities in the state and national park forestry areas. However, we notice an absence of that promise in the writing of the bill. The LNP may have forgotten its pledge to honour those commitments, but we will give them the benefit of the doubt.

The bill claims nature conservation as a main objective. However, it does not extend to the problem areas of wild pigs, wild dogs, feral cats, wild horses and the total lack of any weed management programs. Over the years, we have seen a massive increase in the extension of national parks. Under the previous government, I believe the national park estate increased by about 750,000 acres over five years. I believe that those extensions were a little bit too frivolous and maybe were a vote-buying grab by the conservation movement at that time. Through that massive extension of national parks, we have seen an increase in the number of feral animals, noxious weeds and other problems, all of which affect surrounding landowners. I believe deep down that we cannot expand our national park estate if we cannot manage the parks that we already have. You only need look at the feral cat problem to recognise that. The feral cat is one of the greatest environmental vandals that you could possibly think of. Every day feral cats kill native wildlife and they are breeding like no tomorrow in our national parks. It is the same with feral pigs. Overnight one feral pig, working like a rotary hoe, can rip up a quarter of an acre of land, destroying the sides of creeks and river veins. Those issues should have been addressed before national parks were extended.

I acknowledge the dialogue that the minister is having with Robbie Katter and me about the issues that we had with fires in the southern Tablelands area. The minister worked with the graziers and I commend him for that. In some places there is nowhere to graze cattle because they have been burnt out. There are issues of drought. I also commend the minister for the announcement he made yesterday about Blackbraes. That is good stuff. I do not believe that that would have been allowed previously, and it is definitely to be commended.

A lot of issues were raised after horse riders were kicked out of state forests. When looking at rural and regional Queensland, it is true that this country was developed and opened up from the back of a horse. We need to uphold that culture and that way of life. We need to give people the opportunity to ride horses in the national parks and state forests. I believe that we can work out a system to allow horse riders, trail bike riders and off-road vehicles into our parks and forests. We should allow the different groups to work out a plan as to how they can best utilise parks and state forests. We need to have a dialogue with them, so that there is a resolution that can allow them to ride here and to drive there, and to utilise those areas.

There is another issue that needs to be addressed. I hope that the minister will look at this as well, because national parks make up a massive area in Queensland. In the United States of America, small-time fossickers are given the opportunity to fossick in conservation areas and national parks. They can go in and look for gold, amethysts, sapphires, emeralds and so on. I believe that needs to be investigated, because we want people to be out there doing something. We do not want to push people into the cities where they stay in their homes. We want to encourage them to be outdoors, doing something they enjoy.

In terms of hunting, we need some form of controlled permit for some national parks. Over the years, a lot of money has been spent on shooting feral pigs out of helicopters. Recreational hunters will do that in their own time and at their own expense. They can help sort out the problem without any cost to the taxpayers and the government of Queensland. As I believe I have mentioned before, the Staaten River National Park covers over 4,000 square kilometres. It is a massive area. I have been up there. It is an absolutely mind-boggling park. It is a wonderful area. However, it has been taken over by infestations of rubber vine, lantana, noxious weeds and feral animals including feral dogs. Setting aside land in that park to allow recreational hunters to play their part in resolving that problem would be beneficial to all of us. I say 'well done' to the minister and I commend the bill to the House.