




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (4.26 pm): In speaking to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013, I note that one of the policy objectives is to increase access to national parks and other public lands. The explanatory notes also state—

These amendments contribute to the Queensland government's commitment to open national parks for the enjoyment of all Queenslanders and to deliver improved access for both tourists and the wider community.

This is a very important issue. If we cast our minds back to when the Goss government had a 19-seat majority, one of the Goss government's policies, despite sacking thousands of railway employees, was to ban fishing in national parks. We have to acknowledge that, whilst this country has three million square miles, there are only certain areas that we can access, especially along the coast, and a lot of those areas are national parks. There was a big rising up of communities and fishermen who protested very heavily. There is no doubt that these important pieces of land need to be accessed. Any government that steps in and tells you that you cannot fish in a certain area without any scientific evidence whatsoever to appease a certain minority group for some particular reason should not be governing. I commend the minister for this bill because we need to be able to access national parks. Horse riders need to access national parks. This country was opened up and built on the back of horses. In country areas we do not have trains running at frequent schedules or massive shopping centres. In regional areas we have the bush, but a lot of that bush is state forests or national parks. If we cannot access those areas, what are the people in rural and regional Queensland who do not have many of these opportunities going to do?

The importance of this bill needs to be acknowledged. The bill increases access to national parks so that people have the opportunity of birdwatching, walking, swimming and fishing in national parks. That is what this country is about—the freedom and the right to access national parks to fish and to camp and, hopefully, as time goes by even the right to hunt. The explanatory notes state—

Specifically, the Bill will amend the tenure classes to:

- combine the national park, national park (scientific) and national park (recovery) tenures into one tenure class called 'national park';
- combine the conservation park and resources reserve tenures into one tenure class called 'regional park' ...

I believe—and perhaps the minister could clarify this—that graziers can only access that area which will be called 'regional park'.

It has been mentioned a few times that the minister has overriding powers and is able to override the chief executive. This is to be clarified also. I do not believe that access for grazing should be limited to just one particular area, which will be the regional park. In times of desperation or emergency, I believe there needs to be an ability to access those parks, whether it is a national park or a regional park, and there are a lot of national parks throughout this state. Hopefully the minister

can clarify that. That access is very important in times of desperation. Looking at what came out of the royal commission into the fires in Victoria, it was stated that, had the national parks been managed properly and grazed, there would not have been so many deaths or as much mayhem and destruction. So there is room for co-existence in some way, especially when people are in dire straits or a bad fire area. Being able to access those national parks will prevent greater catastrophes from occurring. We see the rural fire brigades are out there fighting fires in those national parks, but those national parks are not being grazed. Some of the biggest issues that arise in relation to these fires are in the national parks, but they are not managed or grazed and the feedstock is not kept down.

The objectives of this legislation are very commendable and hopefully we can get feedback with regard to that. I have mentioned the fires in Victoria and they brought to light some of the problems that exist. We have problems with wild dogs, feral pigs and feral cats in those national parks. This is very important, too. People talk about how man is destroying the cassowary. People mention those animals I mentioned—the wild dogs, the pigs and the feral cats—but they also talk about the cassowaries being run over by cars or being killed due to the clearing of rainforest, which does not happen. There is a conservation movement that says that man is responsible for the loss of the cassowary. The reason the cassowary is going out on the road all the time is the rainforests are so thick that they find it easier and more accessible to go on the roads. That is why they are being run over.

Management of the national parks is so important. Likewise, what brings the native wildlife numbers down are the feral animals—the feral pigs, the dogs and, to some extent, the cat—and this is difficult to address. The scale of the operation to try to reduce the number of feral pigs and cats needs federal government support. There is an opportunity for the national parks to be opened up to hunting. I believe there is room. I am talking about controlled hunting, not blasting beside little townships located alongside national parks. There are places like the Staaten River National Park which is 4,000 square kilometres in area. We talk about noxious weeds that have been spread in national parks by the feral pig, but we also have a great issue with lantana, which is a toxic pest that has spread all through this state, that has taken over national parks. There has been a push to preserve this land, but at the same time there is also a great push to expand, as there has been in the past. However, it has also not been managed. If we are seeing more feral dogs and feral pigs destroying and causing havoc to neighbouring properties, it is no good spending multiple millions of dollars and wasting our money on expanding and growing national parks if we are not managing them. Honourable members have probably heard this before—and I have brought this up many times—when we see this problem there is also an opportunity for recreational hunters. They can go out there in their own time and at their own expense. There is an opportunity for those recreational hunters in some of these areas that are a breeding ground for the feral cats and feral pigs. I am talking about areas like the Staaten River National Park. That is 4,000 square kilometres that is locked up. There is an opportunity for them to access it in a controlled way. They can do it in their own way and at their own expense. They buy four-wheel drives and they buy camping equipment so they support the outdoor stores. There is an economy within itself. I think this is something that needs to be looked at and, likewise, addressed as time goes.

I appreciate that the agricultural minister is acknowledging this problem; I believe he is doing something in this area. As I mentioned before, I believe the scale of the feral cat problem is so large that federal government support is needed. In national parks and in waterholes—everywhere you look—you see a lot of dead native wildlife. Every day feral cats would kill a native animal or a native bird. All these things are brought to the attention of the House.

(Time expired)