




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 29 October 2013

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.01 pm): I also rise to support the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) and acknowledge that there were a large number of submissions made to the committee's inquiry, many of them expressing concerns about certain aspects of the legislation. This is certainly a matter close to the hearts of many people and I thank the committee for its time in considering the large number of voices who weighed into the public consultation process and commend the minister on his efforts in addressing those concerns expressed by interested parties. I want to assure my own constituents that there is absolutely no intent on any part of this government to water down the protection of our conservation areas. We live in a wonderful part of the world and, although I might be a little biased, my electorate has some of the best natural assets in the state of Queensland. It is important that we protect and manage those assets responsibly, but at the same time we should not hide them from the world. I believe this legislation not only allows for the continued sound management of protected areas but also provides flexibility for the responsible enjoyment of these areas by Queenslanders and our visitors.

By broadening the objectives of the Nature Conservation Act, we are simply recognising a situation that already exists—that is, that protected areas are already managed for a range of outcomes. While the conservation of nature is and always has been the primary focus, we cannot ignore the recreational, commercial and cultural interests that have to be considered as part of the management of protected areas. This bill delivers on the Newman government's commitments to cut red tape and ensure our national parks are effectively managed so that they are available for Queenslanders and visitors to enjoy.

There are currently 14 different types of tenure in place under the act, three of which have never been used. Reducing the number of tenures to seven is a common-sense and practical measure that not only streamlines the legislation but also helps Queenslanders to identify with their protected spaces. For example, the legislation still allows the managers of protected areas to address specific needs and purposes such as controlled scientific research or recovery through the introduction of the new tool called special management areas. These outcomes are extremely important, but we really do not need three separate classes of national park to allow for them. How many average Queenslanders would understand the difference between a conservation park and a resources reserve anyway? By combining these into the one tenure called regional parks, it creates a much stronger identity while still retaining the cultural and conservation objectives of these areas.

The bill also streamlines and creates a more effective process for management planning, and I was surprised to learn that the Auditor-General's report in 2010 found that the former Labor government had just 17 per cent of the management plans for protected areas required by the Nature Conservation Act 1992. Thankfully, this government is taking positive action towards addressing these deficiencies in the process so that we can assure Queenslanders that our protected areas are

being effectively managed. By making the process less resource intensive, we can not only ensure that all national parks are covered by a management plan or statement; managers of national parks can utilise those freed up resources to pursue their primary objective—the day-to-day requirement of looking after our protected areas.

On another issue related to the management and enjoyment of our protected areas, we definitely want Queenslanders and our visitors to enjoy our natural assets. However, we must also be mindful that there are some people who will take advantage of even the most minor incidents for their own personal gain. I am pleased to note that this bill includes civil immunity provisions that will minimise the state's exposure to the growing trend of large personal injury claims based on highly questionable and sometimes frivolous circumstances. However, at the same time we must take full responsibility for the sound and safe maintenance of structures such as bridges and the management of activities such as controlled burns and feral animal control.

In conclusion, here in Queensland we enjoy many natural assets that are the envy of the world. It is vital that we protect those assets but at the same time do not hide them away from the world. The protection of these assets and the economic benefits of enjoying them do not have to be conflicting interests, as some people believe. By passing this bill we can ensure that the managers of our protected areas can achieve all of their desired outcomes. Again, I might be a little biased, but I believe my electorate is one of the most beautiful areas in this beautiful state.

Mrs Cunningham interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I am sure because it is close to Gladstone, member for Gladstone. Some of the areas of note include the Capricornia Cays National Park, which incorporates Lady Musgrave and Lady Elliot, and of course we border the Great Sandy Strait, Littabella and Bustard Head. I am glad that Deputy Speaker Krause is still in the chair, because we were talking earlier about people shooting wildlife. I remind members that Bustard Head was named by Captain James Cook, who actually shot a bustard there to survive his journey. Then of course there is Deepwater, Round Hill, Sir Joseph Banks Conservation Park, 1770, which of course is the site of the second landing of James Cook—I think that trumps Lord Lamington, with all due respect, Mr Deputy Speaker—and Mon Repos is the largest concentration of nesting sea turtles on the eastern seaboard. I am excited about the possibilities that exist to enhance the lifestyles of my constituents and encourage visitors to come and share what we have. I thank the minister and his team and the committee for its hard work and diligence in bringing this bill to the parliament. I look forward to seeing and experiencing the rewards it will bring for Queenslanders.