




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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## **RECREATION AREAS MANAGEMENT AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.02 pm): I rise to speak on the Recreation Areas Management and Another Act Amendment Bill 2014. This bill demonstrates how this government is seeking to expand ecotourism opportunities throughout our state and ensure that Queenslanders can experience all that our beautiful natural assets have to offer.

As members are aware, since 2012 I have been working very closely with the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing to ensure that responsible ecotourism opportunities are encouraged throughout Queensland and particularly—

**Mr Gibson** interjected.

**Ms BATES:** Yes, irresponsible ones. I take that interjection from the member for Gympie. We have been working to ensure that responsible ecotourism opportunities are encouraged throughout Queensland and particularly in the wonderful hinterland area of my electorate such as Springbrook National Park. This is a responsible bill that reduces red tape. It is a practical bill that considers the needs of both the environmental and ecotourism operators, making it easier for the public to experience all that the Queensland environment has to offer.

This bill simplifies legislative processes to allow a single combined authority to be issued for commercial activities in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and other state marine parks. It replaces the burdensome requirement for tourism businesses to obtain two permissions, both the commercial activity permit for recreation areas as well as the marine park permission, with a single combined permit. This will streamline administrative processes for tourism businesses and enable them to lodge a single submission, saving time and money.

This bill will also remove the maximum term for commercial activity permits that form part of a joint permission. This will ensure that under the new streamlined system commercial activity permits that form part of a joint permission have the same term as the marine park permission. This will again reduce red tape and result in savings for ecotourism operators who can reduce the amount of times they have to pay application fees. As it stands, however, marine park permissions are transferable from one person to another if a business is sold. This is not the case for a commercial activity permit. That is why with this bill we will allow commercial activity permits that form part of a joint permission to be transferred, reducing administrative burdens on business and the need to apply for a new permit if the business is sold. This will provide even more clarity and certainty to business operators.

This bill will also enhance the ability of the public and groups of people to actually enjoy our protected areas, recreation areas, state forests and timber reserves by putting an alternative process in place for managing organised events. Until now, groups of local residents who were having an organised activity in these areas were forced to apply for a group activity permit just to enjoy the wonderful environmental attractions of our state.

The minister knows very well that up in Springbrook people could not even have an organised game of cricket on the oval prior to us being elected. The minister certainly unravelled all that red and green tape. I look forward to the day when we have Springbrook Mountain versus Numinbah Valley cricket games, which we used to have many years ago. I looked forward to that, Minister. I thank you for your efforts.

In the 2011-12 financial year as many as 442 permits were granted for group activities, the majority of which were issued for low-impact activities. This is not in line with our commitment to ensuring the public can have improved access to national parks and other public lands. That is why we are making things easier by removing the need for low-impact activities in recreation areas to have a group activity permit, while high-impact activities will still require permits and not automatically receive them. Through this bill we are reducing regulation by allowing the public to more easily access our environment, while simultaneously protecting it from high-impact activities.

In my electorate of Mudgeeraba this will be a welcome change and will allow groups of people wanting to get married in national parks, for instance, or go birdwatching in our state forests to do so with ease and without the burdensome regulation which has previously restricted them. It will encourage local community groups to explore our national parks and forests and educate themselves and future generations about all that they have to offer.

Springbrook National Park, in my electorate, is a wonderful tourism destination that is home to some of the world's most spectacular rainforest views and walking trails. Under this government we have recently opened up Twin Falls circuit which has been closed for a very long time and Warrie circuit which has been closed for as long as I can remember being the member. We have spent almost \$1 million putting in a suspension bridge over Purling Brook Falls and completing the walking track through there which will be a fantastic tourism opportunity for people in this state.

We are making things easier by removing all of the red tape. It will encourage local community groups. The bill will ensure that groups of visitors seeking to explore its natural beauty can do so freely and without having to contact a government department to request the appropriate regulatory approvals. The public should be able to enjoy all that our environment has to offer and where appropriate and should be able to explore it freely without having to answer to bureaucrats in Brisbane.

This is a bill that makes life easier. It is a bill that means businesses can get on with the job of contributing to the economy and providing great services to the public. It is a bill that means that nature lovers can get out into the environment and explore all that it has to offer more freely, without all these burdens. I applaud the minister on his efforts to encourage responsible ecotourism and public enjoyment of the environment in our state. I look forward to working with him to achieve more great things for the national park in my electorate. I commend the bill to the House.