




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (9.40 pm): It is a bit of a privilege to be able to follow that contribution to the debate tonight.

Ms Simpson: Really? A privilege?

Mr POWELL: I think it is a privilege. I know there are plenty of members on this side of the chamber who would love to be in my shoes right now because they are wishing that they could follow the member for Ashgrove in making their speech.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Glass House, take your seat. I am having trouble hearing you. Your own members are interjecting over the top of you.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I told you they would be excited about the opportunity to follow the member for Ashgrove in this debate. Let me take honourable members back a couple of months ago when the member for Cairns jumped ship from the Labor Party and made it clear to the Premier that his vote would not always go the way of the Labor Party. At the time the Premier made some statement to the effect of, 'We are about creating jobs. If anyone gets in my way in pushing through our legislative agenda to create jobs, then woe behold them.'

What we have seen since is nothing about job creation; it is about job destruction. What we have here again this evening is yet another bill that is about destroying jobs in Queensland. Before the minister the member for Ashgrove comes running back into the chamber and tells us that that is not true, that this is all about conservation and protecting national parks, let me use her own words; let me point to New Zealand and to Tasmania. In fact, let me point to any other state jurisdiction in the country of Australia which knows that it is possible to protect their environment and create jobs including in their protected area estate. If people go to New Zealand and Tasmania they will see that not only do they celebrate their environment, they let people into it.

Mr Costigan: What a concept!

Mr POWELL: It is a strange concept. I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday. I want to use one particular example of how job destroying this piece of legislation is—and it has been mentioned by the member for Currumbin, the former minister for tourism—the Obi Obi zip-line. This project did not start under the LNP government of 2012. In fact, the concept started under the Bligh government that preceded it—the concept of ecotourism opportunities that could coexist in our protected area estates that not only encouraged people to get in there and enjoy our environment and learn from it, but would create jobs as well. Yes, during the Newman years we were able to get this project really firing to the point where a tender was let and a preferred proponent was selected. That preferred proponent was going to build a zip-line that would have traversed part of the national park in my electorate at Montville near Kondalilla Falls.

Let me tell honourable members what sort of impact it was going to have. On each and every tree that the zip-line would go between there was going to be less than one square metre's worth of impact. The entire project was going to traverse some dozen trees through the national park. Honourable members can work out the maths on that. Compare that to, say, even the great walk that also winds its way through that same national park. The impact of that great walk is far more than the zip-line would have ever been. The proponents went to great lengths to try to ensure that the current minister sitting opposite me tonight understood this concept, understood the lack of impact that the project would have. More than that, the proponent had gone to great lengths to work with the traditional owners, the Jinibara people of the area whom I have the privilege of representing, and ensuring that they had an opportunity not only to approve of the project, to participate in the project, to receive jobs through the project but also to have an economic opportunity of their own through the marketing and sale of their material.

The proponent endeavoured to tell the minister exactly what it was they were endeavouring to do, but the minister refused to meet and there is no question now as to why that was the case. There is no question as to why he was unable to explain to them why this project was not going to proceed and that is because the member for South Brisbane had done a deal with the Greens and this project was to go away altogether. Now we have this piece of legislation—

A government member interjected.

Mr POWELL: The member opposite should talk to the proponents. Where are you from?

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr POWELL: Exactly. The minister—somewhere down south. She does not have a national park in her electorate anyway and would not know the first thing about a national park.

The proponent did not have their questions answered, was not given any opportunity to reply, was not given any opportunity to demonstrate the benefits or the conservation values of their project and instead was told their project was no longer wanted. Not only will this mean no zip-line for the Obi; it will mean no zip-line anywhere across the state of Queensland, and that is a travesty. There is a generation of Queenslanders and indeed Australians who will miss out on opportunities to experience their national parks because that will no longer be built. Instead, they will head to other jurisdictions. They will go back to Tasmania and over to New Zealand where they will have these opportunities to get into the national parks and see conservation up close. They will get excited and enthused about protecting the environment, as I did as a kid wandering around national parks in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, but our kids will not because not only will we stop zip-lines, but if this legislation passes tonight we are basically stopping anything occurring in national parks.

The other part of the bill that I want to discuss briefly is in relation to graziers. I was contacted by a constituent who heard reports when this bill was first introduced. Her name is Mrs Helen Curtis. She lives in Glass House Mountains. She heard reports on the ABC Sunshine Coast that Labor was trying to kick graziers off their land—land that they had managed for, in some cases, over a century. She called me to tell me that she wanted the LNP to do everything in our power to stop this legislation passing because she has family and she has friends who have lived on those properties. Any suggestion that by having grazing rights over these parcels of land they have not managed the land effectively is just blatantly wrong. In his response this evening the shadow minister demonstrated not only the benefits in some cases of this grazing but also the benefits to the management of that land to the point where people can drive through it and not realise it is any different to the national park itself. It is so well kept because of the resources that these landholders put into these properties, the resources that these landholders put into managing pests and weeds, the resources these landholders put into managing access to these properties and neighbouring national parks.

Over Christmas I had the privilege of visiting Kroombit Tops. To get to Kroombit Tops people have to drive through one of these grazing parcels of land. To be frank, other than a grid, I could not tell that I was crossing from a grazing lease into a national park. By passing this legislation tonight not only are we destroying those lives, we are losing those jobs and we are losing the resources that they invested in managing those protected areas. We will then have to fund them through taxpayers' dollars to try to achieve even half of what those landholders have been achieving. It is primarily for those two reasons that I cannot support this bill in its current form this evening.