




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2016

NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport) (11.14 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill proposes amendments to the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Aboriginal Land Act 1991. They are necessary, in the case of the Nature Conservation Act, to address the previous government's attempts to downgrade the status of our important protected areas in Queensland by weakening their protection. In the case of the Aboriginal Land Act, the amendments will ensure that the intent of the Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Program is carried out. My ministerial colleague has addressed the detail of the Nature Conservation Act proposals, so I will concentrate my remarks on the Aboriginal Land Act amendments.

This is a very minor amendment, but it will have significant benefits in the way the highly successful Cape York Tenure Resolution Program operates. That program is underpinned by the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007, an act that amended the Nature Conservation Act and the Aboriginal Land Act and that was passed by this parliament with bipartisan support. The program has since delivered major benefits to the Aboriginal people of Cape York Peninsula. The intent of the program is to acquire land on Cape York Peninsula, identify economic opportunities for traditional owners, identify the natural and cultural values to be managed on the land, and negotiate the transfer of that land to traditional owners and the management arrangements and support required. This includes the joint management of national parks in the region.

The program to date has resolved tenure on significant properties on Cape York Peninsula including the transfer of 16 existing national parks to joint management with traditional owners as national park—Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land—covering nearly 1.4 million hectares; 21 Aboriginal freehold transfers outside national parks of nearly 1.3 million hectares; five new national parks (CYPAL) totalling approximately 560,000 hectares; 17 nature refuges on Aboriginal freehold of nearly 260,000 hectares; and the establishment of 20 new Aboriginal landholding entities with a combined income of over \$3 million in grants and revenue that, together, create 104 ranger and support officer jobs—casual, part-time and permanent. By anyone's measure, that is an impressive track record and I am proud to be responsible for the program and the benefits it delivers. I want to take this opportunity to thank DATSIP for the way that they work collaboratively with other agencies. I particularly want to thank Ross McLeod for his efforts in this space.

What is being proposed in this amendment relates to section 174 of the Aboriginal Land Act 1991. That section of the act currently only provides for all national parks in the Cape York Peninsula regions to be declared by regulation to be transferable. This amendment proposes that other categories of state owned and managed protected areas such as regional parks can also be regulated as transferrable, thereby simplifying and streamlining the process of returning land to Aboriginal ownership and involvement in management. The amendment is consistent with the intent of the act and merely strips out unnecessary red tape.

Without this amendment, regional parks on Cape York Peninsula would need to be revoked by a motion of this House, transferred to unallocated state land and then regulated as transferrable in order to facilitate the outcomes that this House has previously supported across the political divide. This takes time and resources that are better spent delivering these outcomes. I commend the bill and the amendment to the House.