




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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## **NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (10.17 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Here we go again: another Labor government taking another step backward in national parks management in this state. What we have in this bill is another radical green agenda that will destroy the ability of Queenslanders and residents in my electorate of Mudgeeraba to use and enjoy their national parks and open spaces.

This bill removes the provisions established by the former LNP government in the Nature Conservation Act for communities throughout Queensland to enjoy our protected areas. It removes the capacity we established for social, cultural and commercial use of protected areas in a way that was consistent with the natural and cultural and other values of the area. In place of these provisions we established to encourage the enjoyment of our national parks, we have another Labor government attempting to shut our national parks down by making the sole object of the act the 'conservation of nature'. Let us be clear: the removal of the use and enjoyment provisions in the act is a deliberate move to lock up more of our national parks in what could only be seen as a cynical attempt to bargain for Greens preferences and support. It is a purely ideological agenda being implemented by this Labor government which will destroy ecotourism jobs and the conservation opportunities they present, but of course this is nothing new.

As many members of this House are aware, my electorate of Mudgeeraba is a hinterland electorate which takes in Springbrook National Park. Springbrook is an area of pristine heritage listed national park in my electorate which is widely enjoyed by local, interstate and international visitors wanting to explore one of Queensland's most magnificent natural assets. With sprawling waterfalls and fantastic walking trails, it is an idyllic getaway and home to a small community of hardworking locals, many of whom run their own businesses which rely on tourism to survive. Unfortunately, it has also been the victim of another green agenda of another Labor government. Is there anyone in the House who can remember 'Carbon' Cate, the carbon tax denier? When I spoke to the former LNP government's Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 I recounted the hardships the Springbrook community had faced as a result of secret, grubby deals in 2006 when the then Labor government led by Peter Beattie sold out local residents for preference deals with the Greens.

More than \$40 million of taxpayers' money was spent buying up private land, businesses and heritage homes to lock them away from sight, in many cases quite literally with padlocks on their gates. They were left to slowly decompose or rot away or, in many instances, were even demolished so that the land that was once occupied by these homes and businesses could be reclaimed by the rainforest. What was then a thriving mountain community that relied on the tourism dollar to keep the wheels of local commerce turning had been secretly bought up and locked away before people's eyes. Despite

that secret deal being done under the guise of environmental protection, the community at Springbrook is yet to see any environmental benefit from this costly series of land acquisitions. For no reason other than politics, this community has suffered.

Six years later—in 2012—there appeared to be hope for this small mountain community with the election the LNP government. The LNP government's amendments to the Nature Conservation Act finally saw Springbrook opened up for everyone. That unlocked the gates to encourage ecotourism once again. What followed was a resurgence in tourism numbers, spurred by more than \$1 million of investment in our walking tracks, including the construction of the John Stacey Suspension Bridge on the Purling Brook Falls circuit. It would be remiss of me if I did not acknowledge the member for Buderim, who was then the minister for national parks, recreation sport and racing, for all that he did to get this legislation introduced and these projects off the ground. It was a proud day in 2014 when we visited Springbrook to announce the construction of the suspension bridge alongside so many community members.

Despite the progress we have made, today we see history repeating itself with this bill. We see a retreat to the bad old days of Labor. We see national parks being locked away on a piecemeal basis with no consideration for their proper management. We see no plans for ecotourism in Springbrook. Most importantly, we see no regard for the livelihoods and incomes of our local communities. To give members an example, in January 2015 Springbrook Mountain Manor had two buyers. The Labor government came in and six months later those two buyers had given up and bought elsewhere. Since that time, I also had two buyers who would have opened up Springbrook, but the Labor government, because it is hell-bent on no asset sales, completely denied these two fabulous buyers who would have opened up Springbrook like never before. Sixteen months later, there is no lease and only one person is interested. Let us hope that the only person interested is not ARCS—the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society and Aila Keto—because I can assure members that if the lease goes to that entity the residents of Springbrook will refer the entire ugly stitch-up to the CCC. I will be opposing this bill because of the political manoeuvring and dodgy deals of successive Labor governments, and nothing has changed with this government.