Speech By

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MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BENNETT (Burnett—LNP) (7.36 pm): I suspect that a lot of questions will be asked by Queenslanders as to why it has taken us six months to get to this point. We can only hope that it is not opportunistic and as a result of the loss of John McVeigh. We found quite disappointing the minister's denial in his second reading speech in relation to Queenslanders who have raised concerns about this legislation. When we think about the record of Labor and the management of our protected states we should be nervous. We should be nervous when we look at the details of what is being proposed in the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. We need only to remind ourselves that in 2012 Labor had only 17 per cent of their national park estates with management plans and a terrible record of conservation management. The proposals in the bill are nothing new and only introduce more paperwork. This bill and wind-back amendments appear to follow the Labor Party agenda of changing everything we did clearly without a plan of their own. It also appears to be on the assumption that the previous Labor government had it all perfect prior to the sensible solutions we introduced in 2013, thus allowing this government to simply revert back to the failed policies of what was Queensland Labor. It was far from perfect under Labor and this bill is not the solution.

In referencing the explanatory notes, the 'Policy objectives and the reasons for them' states—

The primary objective the Bill is to reverse a number of amendments made by the previous government that do not align with the current government's commitments and priorities for the protected area estate.

We know it was a policy on the run. It was nothing innovative or courageous, just reversing good policy. We all know that this is the case and hence our concern with a lot of what is being proposed. Much of our protected estates require increased conservation management to ensure viability, not motherhood statements. The biggest fear Queenslanders now have is the ever-increasing dialogue from the minister, with most activities being consistent with the narrative of the management principles of national parks. These management principles and the application thereof, supported by this concept of the cardinal principle of management, are now at the discretion of the minister and the department without appeal. Grazing of stock in appropriate areas of protected states can be beneficial and it should be permitted where needed and there is an appropriate partnership. These arrangements will continue to reduce fuel loads and manage the increase of pests and weeds. The removal of rolling term leases is devastating, as the government has not even considered or consulted with the affected lessees in relation to large capital investments into infrastructure and stock.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr BENNETT: If you want to go on the speaking list, Linus, by all means.

Mr Power: I am on the speaking list!

Mr BENNETT: Well, pull your head in! This is devastating to the generational farming families whose livelihoods will be destroyed by an out-of-touch government controlled by extreme ideological views. Maybe you should listen! In questioning the minister's understanding of the magnitude of the ramifications of the current rolling term lease and term lease holders as proposed by the legislation, the committee asked several questions of the department about the rights and liberties of individuals—section 4(2) Legislative Standards Act 1992—after concerns were raised. These generational farming families, by no fault of their own, cannot conduct normal activities, conduct a normal life, make any sort of long-term plans of succession to the next generation because now they will never know if their new term lease is going to be renewed by a heartless, faceless bureaucrat blindly following the minister's directions on management plans, cardinal principles, with now no appeal rights.

The bill objects to letting private enterprise into state owned estates believing that it will lead to further eroding of government expertise. Public private partnerships are hardly new and have proved useful where governments alone lack the means of achieving results. Moreover, the risk to the environment of this initiative failing could be minimised if the LNP policies had at least been allowed to be reviewed first in state forest reserves and in national parks or nature reserves where biodiversity values are already low. There are many good reasons to manage challenges in our protected estates and claiming the cardinal principle is the only solution to base the foundation on which to manage our national parks is flawed and shortsighted.

The changes that the LNP made were for many reasons, one not being appeasing extreme conservation groups that pull the strings of this government. We needed changes, after 20 years of neglect by those opposite, to fire regimes, compounded by the presence of feral cats and shifts in the abundance in some habitats of large feral herbivores such as cattle. We need to acknowledge the difficulties with this notion. Park rangers have explained to me that a program to eliminate animals from the park estate without a solution had changed the fire regime and increased the risk of wildfires, like we have seen in Tasmania, Victoria and locally in my region's national parks. All could have been prevented.

Adult cattle eat around 20 kilos of dry grass per day. They remove much of the flammable material from our protected estates. With management gone, hot fires will begin to consume the uncropped grass. Extremely hot and large fires may sweep deep across our protected areas and, in many cases, private estates adjoining the state reserves and this government is proposing a principle, a cardinal principle, to solve the problem. After a recent wildfire in my region I stood beside one victim of the flames, a gigantic tree. Its metre-thick trunk was still smouldering. Its once-dense canopy had been a home to many species, but what I saw was a mess of brown leaves and ash. That giant must have been hundreds of years old. It had been growing in one of my beautiful national parks where for all its life it had been safe from wildfires. However, with the absence of grazing and Aboriginal fire management, as well as a lack of departmental resources, its trunk was burnt through and it collapsed. Tragically, it was not alone. The whole area was transformed by an enormous and extremely hot fire that killed everything in the area.

If we are to fully understand what is happening to Australia's biodiversity, we must consider also the assault of cane toads, feral cats, pigs, cattle, horses, donkeys, noxious weeds, foxes, domestic cats, rabbits, camels, deer and goats. We need human intervention. We must not lock up our protected estates and throw away the key, as was done prior to 2012. In Australia we have 72 vertebrate species that have established feral populations. When combined with fires, their varied impacts are making our national parks unsafe for native species. Those living close to the land have long understood that, but this government would prefer to listen to those from leafy inner-city suburbs who think they know best.

I have heard from the so-called experts who I suspect are advising the minister and who have been talking about the need to connect national parks by creating corridors that would allow species to migrate as Queensland's climate changes. Recently, an Aboriginal elder responded that that sounded like a great idea in theory, but the fact was that in his region many of our national parks are infested with feral pigs that use those corridors, thereby inflicting even more damage on the environment. That issue was raised in several submissions to the committee. The Cape York Natural Resource Management Limited stated its concerns around purchases being made to create corridors and landowners questioning the logic of transferring, in some cases, entire grazing leases into national parks.

Medium sized native animals are critically important to Queensland's environment. In many habitats they are the largest burrowers and their burrows provide refuge for other species. Moreover, the soil heaps created by digging bring fresh nutrients to the surface, providing habitat for many ecologically important plants. Feral animals disperse seeds, eat insects and can kill trees if their numbers build up. Other animals distribute nutrients such as phosphorous across the countryside. If we take out any of those vital functions, we end up with sick ecosystems. Therefore, what is to be done?

At the highest level, it is clear that today Queenslanders must take up the role forged over 40,000 years ago and act as a keystone species in Australia's varied environment by managing fire, regulating the number of feral animals and eliminating weeds. If this is not done, Queensland will lose many of its important species while, in the south, the last remnants of medium sized mammal fauna will be lost. It is unclear just where this would lead us over time. Both ecosystem stability and productivity are likely to be affected. This bill is a serious backward step.

There are examples of feral-proof enclosures that offer other methods of conservation. These involve fencing areas; eliminating cats, foxes, rabbits and other feral animals; and reintroducing endangered species. Those fenced areas act as arks, keeping the survivors safe from extinction and maintaining genetic diversity until better options are developed. Those types of initiatives would be excluded under this proposal. It is reasonable for a not-for-profit organisation to be charged with protecting Australia's biodiversity in the long term. It may be thought that as they are dependent on donations they may have a tenuous existence, but overseas some not-for-profit organisations have operated successfully for a century or more. Some organisations suffer up and downs as the economy expands or contracts, but so too do government departments. Indeed, recently one not-for-profit staffer told me that employees feel very safe and secure in their jobs. We should be looking at alternative management strategies for our national parks.

The reality is that management will become dire and we cannot afford to persist with business as usual or the failed policies of what was a tired and out-of-touch Labor government. Its policies have failed previously and it is charging back down that tired dry gully, which is not the answer. I say to the government: be brave and be creative; look for new and modern reforms to allow what we all want, that is, the protection of our protected estate. If not, at least change direction. A great platform was provided by the previous government. If we are to head off many more expected waves of extinctions, Queensland National Parks need not-for-profit organisations and the private sector to work with government to manage these issues. This is about solutions, policies for governance and the privilege of conserving our endangered flora and fauna.

As if there were not already enough concerns with the proposals in the bill, the proposal to reinstate the conservation of nature as the sole objective of the Nature Conservation Act, removing all other references, including community use and enjoyment of protected areas consistent with the natural values of the area, should send alarm bells to every tourism operator and stakeholder in Queensland. We hear the minister talk about management principles, cardinal principles and the conservation of nature as the sole objective of the bill, but what do members think will then happen to commercial tourism operators, for example? In relation to this issue, in its response to the committee the department stated—

> Uses undertaken commercially (for example a commercial tour operation) may require a lease, agreement, license, permit or other authority, which is considered on a case by case basis. In addition to the management principles, further criteria are prescribed for consideration when deciding such applications. The legislation may also include limitations or restrictions that apply to granting permits for certain uses. The nature of the proposal and assessment process may result in certain uses being authorised is some locations, but not others.

There it is: already the proposed management principles provide for additional requirements and further criteria. One can imagine the new bureaucratic nonsense that will be applied to already over-regulated operators. Does that instil confidence for investment? I do not think so. Further insult to Queensland's tourism sector was disclosed during committee deliberations when the department also clarified the vicious intent of the bill. One respondent stated—

> The legislation also includes a number of specific requirements that affect whether a particular use can occur on a particular class of protected area ...

Further—

> Restricted access areas can be declared over some locations, effectively precluding activities that would otherwise be allowed in these areas.

There will be more negative consequences for those currently operating commercial activities. Under this proposal, we will not have security and nor will those operators.

Further to a number of problems and anomalies identified in the proposed bill, of particular concern was the lack of consultation with stakeholders involved in the outdoor recreation industry, such as camping and education providers. The intention to reinstate the conservation of nature as the sole objective of the Nature Conservation Act raises several areas of concern. By removing objectives such as the use and enjoyment of protected areas by the community, the government may make all other current and future activities subservient. The bill must allow access to our protected estates for outdoor

educational programs for our youth, which currently are run successfully through schools. The change being proposed, which has an overarching ideological and philosophical view towards educational access to national parks, will see diminished or no access by educational providers and further frustration and delay to upcoming applications—

A government member interjected.

Mr BENNETT:—for access to many protected area estates for educational purposes. As stated educational and recreational activities need to be acknowledged and allowed to occur in all our protected area estates. I take the interjection from the member for Logan. I acknowledge that the minister is going to move some amendments, but they have not been moved yet. Let us just see what happens.

There are items that require clarification by the minister during the debate. Could the minister explain the management principles of conservation parks versus national parks? We have seen 140 years in some examples of good, serviced local management arrangements within protected estates. What is different now? Has the minister considered or consulted the banking institutions in these decisions in terms of rendering small business operations worthless? With declared weeds like lantana, giant rat's-tail grass, parthineum and cat's claw, all currently managed by the lessees, who does he propose to manage and carry out these tasks from now on? What does he expect these estates to look like in 10 to 20 years when green panic, Rhodes grass, kikuyu, buffel grass and various legumes that are maintained now by lessees is lost?

With the current practice by lessees to carry out controlled cold burns and mosaic controls, is the minister aware that there are many examples of areas that have not had hazard reduction controls since 2006 when the activity of kicking graziers out of protected estates intensified? Would he support tenure based declarations as opposed to scientific based declarations—that is, a one-size-fits-all approach—when in many cases the government does not even know what it is claiming to protect? What cost to taxpayers does the minister see occurring from this bill considering the management of the 81 estates is currently at no cost to government?

Mr Power: You asked that.

Mr BENNETT: We have done some work since that question, member for Logan. The estimated cost is $25 per hectare. This equates to tens of millions of dollars. These lessees are paying rates and charges to local governments and buying fencing materials. This is all to cease under this proposal. What framework will QPWS use to determine the 'appropriateness of the use when the lease expires' in relation to leases used for agriculture, grazing or pastoral purposes on protected areas?

I now turn to the issue of rolling term leases and the proposed amendments to the Land Act 1994 in the bill at clauses 38 to 45. Over decades a significant number of grazing properties and interests have been included in the national estate and have been transferred into our national parks. We know successive governments made purchases to create corridors, for example. What is now clear by this heavy-handed proposal in the bill is that there will be a transfer of entire grazing leases into national park tenure when clearly only a portion of the estate contains high-value ecosystems, flora and fauna. We all agree that that should be protected. Today the minister does not know what is there and the department does not know what is to be protected. We have many estates without real management plans or instruments to assist in long-term sustainable protection. This has a negative economic and social impact.

There will be significant impacts on employment opportunities across the state. This was particularly evident from the submissions from the Cape York community. We have seen from the submissions to the committee a reduced rate base for local governments and a further reduction in population in regional Queensland. With the real issue of resources and an obvious lack of capacity of the department to manage the current protected estate, it would be suggested that an ecological assessment of identified properties having been transferred to national park tenure, particularly those that had significant value for other purposes, be revisited, and management structures like excising portions of the area and transferring back to long-term grazing or commercial interests would be of benefit.

We heard during the debate that the removal of the rolling term lease option was to remove the perception of perpetual lease expectations. In the explanatory notes the minister provides the following justification for the change to appeal rights—

The term lease provisions will also remove the misconception that some lease holders may have that that these leases are perpetual. Appeals will not be available in relation to a decision to refuse the renewal of a term lease unless the decision was based on the applicant not fulfilling the conditions of the lease. Returning to this framework is more appropriate for leases for agriculture, grazing and pastoral purposes within nature conservation areas and specified national parks due to the need to manage their natural values properly.

That would be great if anyone knew exactly what the management principles or the instruments were.

For those who are particularly interested in how the changes in the NCOLA Bill affect holders of rolling term leases, I quote an extract from a contribution by former minister Cripps during the second reading debate on the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. I refer to the *Hansard* of 20 May 2014. That bill amended the Land Act so the rolling term lease provisions of the act applied to leases used for agricultural, grazing or pastoral purposes. Mr Cripps stated—

In its report on the bill, the committee recommended that I clarify that the intent of a rolling term lease is not to create the perpetual lease. The member for Mackay has also sought my assurance on this issue, and I am more than happy to do so; however, this assurance is not just based upon the intent of the legislation. The reality is that a rolling term lease is simply not a perpetual lease in either form or substance. There is no uncertainty or ambiguity on this point. A rolling term lease is a different statutory grant to a perpetual lease. They are not the same thing. To compare these two statutory grants is not unlike comparing mangos and watermelons: while they are both fruit, they are very different. Similarly, while a rolling term lease and a perpetual lease are both leases, they are each a unique statutory grant. A perpetual lease has no term, does not expire, and therefore does not require an extension. In contrast, a rolling term lease is extended for a term no greater than the original lease and will expire unless extended, and the rights and interests are no greater than they were previously. Extension is not automatic, as it requires an application by the lessee and must meet a number of minimal conditions. The fact that a rolling term lease creates a greater security of tenure for a lessee and that it can be extended more than once does not cause the rolling term lease to become a perpetual lease or an exclusive lease. I repeat: just as a mango is not a watermelon, a rolling term lease is not perpetual.

Clearly we have problems with the bill and the interpretation the minister seems to be applying to this issue. Clause 39 amends section 164 'What is a rolling term lease' of the Land Act 1994. These new sections provide that leases for agriculture, grazing and pastoral purposes within a nature conservation area or specified national park are no longer rolling term leases and are now term leases. The new clauses are set out in the explanatory notes.

The committee noted the significant change from the existing provisions at clause (1)(b) which provides that a lease used for agriculture, grazing and pastoral purposes is not a rolling term lease if the leased land is within a nature conservation area or a specified national park. Clause 43 of the bill also provides for changes to rolling term lease provisions by inserting new part 1N into chapter 9 of the Land Act 1994. New section 521ZP provides a definition of 'protected area lease' whereby a rolling term lease under the unamended act, section 164(1)(b), is one in which the leased land, or part of the leased land, is within a nature conservation area or a specified national park.

Currently, section 164 of the Land Act 1994 provides that a rolling term lease applies in circumstances where: it is a lease for tourism purposes for land on a declared island in the state leasehold land portfolio; it is a lease for agricultural, grazing or pastoral purposes, including leases on state forests, protected areas and timber reserves. Section 164C(5)(a) provides that a landholder may apply to extend a rolling term lease at any time during the last 20 years of the term of the lease unless there are special circumstances.

Section 155(1) provides that a term lease must not be issued for more than 50 years. However, pursuant to section 155(2)(a) to (c) a term lease may be issued for up to 100 years if it is for: a significant development or the operation and maintenance of a significant development; a timber plantation; or a development that involves existing improvements that in the opinion of the minister have required a high level of investment.

Section 155AA(f) provides that a landholder can apply to renew their lease once 80 per cent of the term of the lease has elapsed. Potential problems identified under the fundamental legislative principles review included issues with reverting from a rolling term lease to a term lease by way of clauses 39 and 43. There is the potential to adversely affect the rights and liberties of individuals pursuant to section 4(1) of the Legislative Standards Act 1992. In particular, it may affect leaseholders of agricultural, grazing and pastoral land within a nature conservation area or a specified national park.

The explanatory notes acknowledge the potential impact of the proposed amendments in relation to the renewal of a lease. They state—

For a lease holder that would like to continue with a lease (rather than allowing it to expire at the end of its term), the lease holder will need to make an application for the renewal of the term lease. They will only be able to do this after 80% of the existing term has expired, rather than any time in the last 20 years of the term of the lease as is currently the case for rolling term leases

A broader range of matters must be considered by the chief executive in deciding whether to grant or refuse the renewal of a term lease when compared to the extension of a rolling term lease. One consideration is whether the land is needed for environmental or nature conservation purposes. A decision to refuse the renewal of a term lease is not appealable unless the decision was based on the applicant not fulfilling the conditions of the lease.

As mentioned in the explanatory notes, the committee noted that in relation to the term leases there are a broader range of matters that the chief executive must consider, and these are set out in section 159 of the act. The explanatory notes provided the following justification reverting to rolling term leases—

The above consequences are considered justified on the basis that returning to the term lease arrangements provides a more appropriate mechanism for decision making with respect to leases on land managed by QPWS. This will allow decisions to be made based on contemporary information about the impact of the lease on the natural values of the area before deciding an application. Where the use under the lease is inconsistent with the management principles for the area, the term lease provisions are more effective in allowing these lands to be protected for the purpose they were intended.

I make the following comments. The amendments provided by clauses 39 and 43 in relation to the change from rolling term leases to term leases certainly flagged the committee's attention. The committee noted that consultation has taken place in relation to the bill's amendments, as discussed in the explanatory notes on pages 8 and 9. However, it was unclear whether the department undertook any consultation with respect to the proposed amendments with current rolling term leaseholders other than through groups such as AgForce. The committee also noted the significant correspondence from interest groups supporting the proposed changes in the bill were compiled in a cut-and-paste format all supporting a consistent and predictable theme.

The amendments provided for by clauses 39 and 43, in reverting from rolling term leases to term leases, will also see the appeal rights of leaseholders diminished. The explanatory notes confirm that the decision by the chief executive not to renew a term lease will not be appealable.

At present, section 164C(7) of the Land Act 1994 provides that if the minister refuses to extend a rolling term lease for which an extension application is made, the lessee may appeal against the minister's decision. However, in relation to term leases, an applicant can appeal against the chief executive's decision to refuse the renewal application only where the reason for the refusal was that the applicant had not fulfilled the conditions of the lease.

These instruments were issued under the Land Act and should be entitled to access the full property rights associated with that instrument. This amendment would effectively create two classes of term lease under the Land Act. It is inaccurate to say that the land when reverting to conservation will be used for the purpose for which it was intended. The initial intention was a term lease for agriculture, grazing or pastoral purposes. Unless the leaseholder has breached the conditions of the lease, they should be fully entitled to renew the lease, including access to the rolling term lease provisions in the Land Act.

There were significant fundamental legislative principle issues that were presented to the committee. At present, rolling term leaseholders have the ability to appeal, as we have mentioned before. This option will be removed pursuant to the proposed amendments as rolling term leaseholders are required to revert to a term lease. The reduced appeal rights for current rolling term leaseholders are potentially a breach of the Legislative Standards Act, which provides that an administrative power should be subject to review.

The former scrutiny of legislation committee, the SLC, was also opposed to clauses removing the right of review, and it took particular care to ensure the principle that there should be a review or appeal against the exercise of administrative power. Where ordinary rights of review were removed, thereby preventing individuals from having access to the courts or a comparable tribunal, the SLC took particular care in assessing whether sufficient regard had been afforded to individual rights, noting that such a removal of rights may be justified by the overriding significance of the objectives of the legislation.

With reference to estimates last year, on 21 August 2015, when asked by the member of Mount Isa about the management of both land and animals in severely affected areas and the minister's consideration on a case-by-case basis of the need to utilise grazing capacities in national parks, particularly around fire fuel management, the minister said—

In those circumstances where the department advises me that grazing is useful for managing the park, I am in principle in support of it and will do what I need to do to facilitate that. There are a couple of circumstances that we are addressing right now that will likely see that occurring.

There is a serious contradiction in the bill's proposed clause 29, which has the provision for the exact circumstances quoted in estimates. Clearly, one thing is said at estimates and another thing is intended with the introduction of this proposed legislation. It was noted during the estimates hearing that the minister said—

The real challenge with building the national park estate is securing recurrent government funding for management ... it is the management and managing it well that ends up being expensive in the long term. That is why one of the things we have said is that we will not transfer acquisitions into the parks estate until we have secured management funding, until we have the funding to put rangers in there ... the last thing we want is poorly managed parks.

My problem has always been this government's capacity to manage parks. The main problem the government has is that management plans or management instruments are not complete or adequate, which they have already admitted. You do not have enough park rangers to replace capacity. You do not know what you are proposing to protect or manage, including those areas where leases managed the estate for Queenslanders. You want to kick Queenslanders out with no plan.

The bill includes the creation of special management areas on national parks that will allow for special activities to take place such as scientific research or the manipulation of an area's natural resources to achieve a conservation outcome. A special management area will also be used to allow the opportunity for the continuation of existing uses on a national park. Historically, those interests have been managed through either a grandfathering provision within the act or a previous use authority. Those activities will now be allowed to continue under a special management area, but there will be the requirement that the natural and cultural values of the area are not diminished as a result of the activity being authorised.

It should be a requirement that a management statement is developed for all protected areas. These are a much simpler planning document to prepare and in most cases are considered to adequately cover the relevant management issues. In those situations where there is a particular need for a management plan—for example, where more complex management issues need to be resolved—a management plan can take the place of a management statement. The process for developing a management plan has also been simplified to ensure that the planning process is as resource efficient as possible.

There was some interest in the committee about why we are looking at returning to an inflexible and outdated land tenure structure when world's best practice uses non-tenure specific categorisation of protected estates such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the IUCN, system. This would enable multiple categories within the one tenure depending on the particular natural assets and management objectives. It does raise the question of why are we proposing to return to the old failed system.

In relation to part 2, clause 4, section 4, strong objections to this clause were received from Indigenous groups. It is important that I acknowledge that there is a proposed amendment, but at this point in time there were strong objections. We should consider the retention of the existing object, namely 'the involvement of Indigenous people in the management of protected areas in which they have an interest under Aboriginal tradition or island custom'. Removal of this from the object of the act is seen as regressive. The High Court decisions in the Mabo and Wik cases made it clear that the sovereignty of Australia's Indigenous people had never been extinguished. This should mean to us all in this place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should have the right to manage these areas and decide any management plans for protected estates in Queensland.

When asked during the committee's deliberations as to the practical effect of removing section 4(a) as an object of the Nature Conservation Act in relation to the involvement of Indigenous persons in the management of protected areas in which they have an interest under Aboriginal tradition or island custom, the response and justification was there will be no practical effect of removing section 4(a) from the object of the act. As I said, why do it? It appears that we will get that inserted back into the legislation as we move through the amendments during consideration in detail.

The minister is hell-bent on the cardinal principle and this notion of 'conservation of nature' as the sole object of the act, but it excludes the most important stakeholders. The department's response goes on to advise that apparently they have generally outlined management arrangements between the department and Indigenous persons in Indigenous land use agreements, ILUAs, or Indigenous management agreements, IMAs, so we have the management structures and we have the mechanisms. We certainly welcome the inclusion and retention of section 4(a). I quote the Cape York traditional owners—

Our main concerns with the proposed amendments are

- Their potential to impact negatively on the State Government's relationships with Cape York's Traditional owners—

their words, not mine—

To that effect we believe that the Act should include explicit recognition of their rights to determine what happens on their country, and

- That they are consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

In conclusion, I wish to highlight for the benefit of the House comments from another submitter specifically opposed to the proposed changes by the government to the object of the act. The submission is well written, thoughtful to the complexity of the Nature Conservation Act and worth

highlighting in supporting the retention of the current object of the Nature Conservation Act. The expansion of the object of the act by the previous LNP government appropriately facilitated the needs of all stakeholders while upholding 'the conservation of nature' as its primary objective. Their submission explained that they do not believe the conservation of nature within protected areas and the ecologically sustainable commercial use of these areas should be considered mutually exclusive. They stated—

> Reverting back to the conservation of nature as the sole objective of the NCA will negatively impact industries that depend on access to some of Queensland's protected areas. The proposed changes have the potential to place long term access to protected areas in question and jeopardise regional employment opportunities. These industries provide financial returns to the relevant government departments. They also provide information about any illegitimate activities which may be encountered to the relevant land managers. If legitimate environmentally and socially responsible businesses are restricted or excluded from Queensland's protected areas then a serious threat of uncontrolled, irresponsible and illegitimate operators will exist. Market demand will still exist and opportunities for unscrupulous operators to fill the gap will have been created.

I welcome the contribution of other members to the debate as we strive to ensure good policy for all Queenslanders is enacted.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Crawford): Order! Member for Burnett, before you take your seat, earlier in your speech you made reference directly to the member for Logan. Can I ask you to put those through the chair? Secondly, can I ask you to withdraw the words 'pull your head in'?

Mr BENNETT: I withdraw.