




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2016

NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (11.38 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their participation in this debate on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. It has been an unedifying sight, watching those opposite contort what is a very straightforward piece of legislation into something it is not—watching the member for Nanango pretend that this bill will change the status of grazing families like the Lohses. Apparently she was a lawyer. You would not want to be getting legal advice from her. She would read a law that makes no difference to leaseholders' rights and she would tell you that it means you will be evicted. She would have you packing your bags. That is the quality of the advice she would be giving. I suspect the member for Nanango did not read the bill. She just talked to the member for Burnett, who knows full well that this bill does not do what he is claiming it does.

Those opposite say they care about farmers, but these repeated campaigns of dishonesty are not fair on them either. Nothing in this bill changes anything of substance with regard to the rights of leaseholders. It does not affect ecotourism projects either, despite the member for Glass House's comments about the Obi Obi zip-line proposal, which has absolutely nothing to do with this bill. While we are on the subject, he was incorrect to say that I refused to meet with the proponent. He misled the House. I met with the proponent on 16 June 2015. Incidentally, that was the same day I met with Robert and Sharon Lohse. It is in my published ministerial diary and I know that members opposite read the published dairies because they count the number of meetings I have with union officials. I find it very hard to believe they did not see those entries because on that day I also met with Ben Swan from the Australian Workers' Union. The zip-line proposal is another example of something that is not affected by this bill. The government is continuing to actively pursue an ecotourism agenda, working closely with my friend and colleague the member for Ashgrove. It is a nonsense to suggest, like the member for Glass House did, that our kids will not get enthused about nature if they cannot experience it on a zip-line. Generations past—including, we heard, the member for Glass House, the member for Burdekin and others who shared their fond memories of national parks—all experienced them without needing a zip-line.

It does not end there. Many of the members opposite seem confused about what this bill does. The member for Gympie begged for more conservation parks, ignorant of the fact that it was the LNP that abolished the conservation park tenure. We are putting it back in this bill that he is opposing. It is late, so let me sum it up pretty simply: it is the Nature Conservation Act. It should be about conserving nature. It is not that hard. What has been hard was listening to those opposite claiming they had some sort of positive record on national parks, claiming they supported park management. What did they do? What is their legacy? They cut the budget for national park management by about 20 per cent. They cut rangers. There were 63 fewer active and paid rangers in 2014 than there were when Labor was in office. They also sacked 100 staff from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in their purge of the

Public Service. This is the legacy of the LNP on national parks. There was no regard for conservation, the cardinal principle or providing the necessary support to those front-line staff who work hard to protect our unique protected area estate.

Several members opposite raised a concern that outdoor education providers would have no access to national parks under this bill and this would prevent children experiencing these unique areas. Again, this is incorrect and misleading as educational users remain in the management principles and this government will continue to ensure children benefit from experiencing nature. The member for Burdekin spoke about the Wongaloo Regional Park and the work of local people in assisting with the management of that park. I was pleased to visit it with the member last year at his invitation and see these efforts firsthand. This bill has no impacts on the efforts at Wongaloo because Wongaloo is not a national park but a regional park and grazing will remain as an authorised activity for management purposes. The opposition member has to get his facts right before raising these matters.

In relation to the amendments that will revert approximately 70 rolling term leases back to term leases, the amendments will ensure that the most appropriate decision-making framework under the Land Act is used when decisions about whether to renew leases on national parks, regional parks and state and forest reserves are made. I must point out once again that in relation to appeal rights the decision about whether to extend a rolling term lease or to renew a term lease must be agreed to by the chief executive of the Nature Conservation Act. Under the current act and under both scenarios—that is, whether it is a term lease or a rolling term lease—there is no right under the Nature Conservation Act to appeal against a decision on its merits if the chief executive under the Nature Conservation Act makes a decision to refuse the extension or renewal of a lease if the land is required for nature conservation purposes. The bill makes no change to that.

Finally, I thank the Agriculture and Environment Committee for its analysis of this bill and all those who have contributed to the debate. I also want to thank my ministerial and departmental staff for their continued hard work and dedication in preparing this bill. I commend the bill to the House.