




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

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Parks, Rangers

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (2.32 pm): The Palaszczuk government is committed to jobs and job creation. Park rangers play a very important role in protecting—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba North, you are warned under standing order 253A for your interjections. They are disorderly. If you proceed, I will take the appropriate action.

Dr MILES: Park rangers play a very important role in protecting the outstanding natural places in Queensland that remain the envy of the world. I recognise that our rangers are critical to conservation and to ensuring that our tourism industry remains prosperous. Our park rangers protect our national parks—from managing fires and weeds to maintaining our beautiful tracks, trails and camping areas as well as communicating with and educating visitors about our national parks. That is why we have committed in the 2016-17 budget to rebuilding our ranger workforce over the next four years after the LNP government slashed the number of front-line rangers. Up to 31 new front-line park ranger jobs will be delivered over the next four years under a \$35.9 million investment in new national park funding and an expansion of the state's protected area estate. Up to 21 of those new jobs—or more than two-thirds—are expected to be in place by the end of June 2017. These park ranger positions will be directly involved in the establishment and management of new national parks in all corners of the state, protecting a wide diversity of flora and fauna.

In particular, I am proud of the fact that this investment will benefit regional Queensland. Fourteen new jobs will be created in north-western and central Queensland, another six in south-east and south-west Queensland, and one overseeing marine parks and coastal islands. These ranger jobs will be advertised in remote communities, providing local employment, and many small towns will benefit through the provision of goods and services. Houses to accommodate some of these new ranger staff are already under construction, with \$450,000 being spent at Undara west of Townsville, creating flow-on jobs in the construction sector. Planning is underway for a new house at Littleton National Park near Croydon.

As new fences and fire lines are built to support park management, flow-on work will be created for local businesses supplying machinery and equipment. As the popularity of our parks grow, tourism will provide longer term economic prosperity, with visitors purchasing food and fuel on their way to and from the parks. This is just the start of a new investment in our natural wonders—an investment that will deliver long-term sustainability for conservation and for regional Queensland.