




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2017

MOTION

Revocation of State Forest Areas

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumbamba—ALP) (12.15 pm): I rise to speak in support of the revocation motion. I also echo the comments made by the member for Glass House, who talked about the growth of the area. The member also talked about the need for increased rail infrastructure. If he is asking for that increased rail infrastructure there, he can certainly support Cross River Rail. Cross River Rail will take nine minutes off the average train journey for people travelling from his area to the city. Cross River Rail is a very important component to cope with the growth in his area.

The growth in that area means that we need some more infrastructure. This revocation is going to facilitate some very welcome infrastructure on the Sunshine Coast. As we have heard, this site is part of the state forest portfolio, but it is a unique part of it. In 1929, this site was set up to trial the planting of exotic pines from the USA. In 1931, the site became a nursery and, until 1958, it was the forestry headquarters. Some of those buildings are used for drying out cones to produce seeds. A lot of the buildings are old and rundown. There are a couple of houses on the site that are also fairly rundown. The Coochin Creek Rural Fire Brigade is also located on that site with a purpose-built shed.

It is good that we are helping the council to create a facility so that the Coochin Creek Rural Fire Brigade can stay on the site, but it is clear that this site can do a lot more for the local community. I welcome the move by the Sunshine Coast Council to redevelop the site with new buildings, new roads and new car parks. Currently, there is a master plan for the site. To advance that plan, the council needs to have tenure of the site. By looking at this master plan, it is very clear that the council can build a better base for the rural fire brigade and perhaps also for the local SES, which is flagged in the master plan. This seven-hectare site would be a great site for a council depot, but I think that integrating it with those emergency services—the rural fire brigade and the local SES—could work really well. The local SES in my area is co-located at the council depot at Deception Bay. That co-location works really well. Those services can utilise each other's equipment to help deal with emergencies. If the council redevelops that site, I think that it would be a great opportunity for the Coochin Creek Rural Fire Brigade.

At this point, I pay tribute to the great work of the rural fire brigades that this revocation will help so much. They have 36,000 volunteers across Queensland. There are 1,415 volunteer based rural fire brigades in Queensland and 439 of them have stations. The Palaszczuk government is really proud to fund those rural fire brigades with \$42.9 million annually. Aside from its traditional role of fighting fires, the RFS will be playing a greater role in preventing fires in the future. That will be one of the things that will be happening from this site. That rural fire brigade will be educating the community, it will be preparing bushfire ground before the fire season and it will be focusing on mitigating bushfire risk to property and life.

For rural fire brigades to keep serving their communities, they need help and that is what we are doing. The RFS has a growing fleet. It has 1,080 vehicles of all sizes. One hundred and one of those vehicles were purchased by the brigades and 979 vehicles were supplied by the Rural Fire Service. Some of these vehicles are quite old. The average age of these vehicles is 12 years. The brigades have permission to operate vehicles that are 30 years old with safety checks. I know that the rural fire brigades love their old fire trucks. They may not be the newest or most flash of vehicles, but the rural fire brigades look after their vehicles in such a loving fashion.

The Palaszczuk government is helping them maintain their vehicles. We commenced the Fuel and Vehicle Maintenance Funding Initiative on 12 July 2016 to help fire brigades exactly like the Coochin Creek Rural Fire Brigade. Under this initiative the QFES provides up to \$3.8 million to support registered vehicles through fuel and maintenance funding. The funding also pays for annual safety inspections and repairs. What is more, the Palaszczuk government is increasing their budget to assist with the funding of the replacement of some of these vehicles. We are looking after our Rural Fire Service brigades, making sure that they have the funds they need. I look forward to seeing the great facilities at this site. I commend the rural fire brigades throughout Queensland for the great work that they do.