




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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MOTION

Revocation of State Forest Areas and Dedication of Protected Area

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.03 pm): I am pleased to support the minister's motion that seeks to dedicate parts of the Yurol and Ringtail state forests to national park. I will spend more than one minute speaking on this matter, as opposed to the member opposite.

Koala habitat mapping has shown that all remnant vegetation on Yurol and Ringtail state forests is koala habitat and, importantly, most of this is core koala habitat. The dedication of parts of these state forests as national park will complement koala conservation activities in adjacent areas that encompass both rural and urban koala populations.

We recognise that koalas in South-East Queensland are facing numerous and real impacts as a result of habitat loss, disease and threats introduced by population growth and climate change. The South East Queensland Koala Population Modelling Study undertaken in 2015 presented findings of an independent assessment of the conservation status of the koala in seven local government areas. This data did show a declining koala population, despite dedicated policy and planning responses.

The Palaszczuk government has responded and commissioned a Koala Expert Panel to provide advice on actions to ensure the long-term persistence of koala populations in the wild within South-East Queensland. The Koala Expert Panel has conducted an extensive review of Queensland's koala policies and provided their findings to the Queensland government in a report titled *Queensland Koala Expert Panel: a new direction for the conservation of koalas in Queensland*. The panel's report sets the agenda for a comprehensive and cohesive approach to the management of this threatened species.

One of the critical issues was the panel's contribution to the draft statutory regional plan for South-East Queensland ShapingSEQ. ShapingSEQ is vitally important in defining South-East Queensland's desired long-term settlement pattern and to help plan and manage growth across the region. The panel's comments suggested greater emphasis be placed on the preservation of the koala and reaching an appropriate balance between development and koala preservation.

In response, ShapingSEQ does place a high priority on the delivery of an SEQ koala conservation strategy, to be led by the Department of Environment and Science, which is intended to deliver the Queensland government's response to the panel. The panel's feedback to the regional plan has also included specific reference in the 50-year vision within ShapingSEQ to maintain the SEQ koala population through innovative protection of their habitat and management of threats across the region's landscapes as well as encouraging interconnected habitats.

Current and future land use planning is critical. I know this is of particular concern within parts of my electorate which are being increasingly urbanised. I regularly point to PDA guideline No. 17—'Remnant vegetation and koala habitat obligations in Greater Flagstone and Yarrabilba PDAs'. The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that, as a result of the development within these PDAs, there is

no net loss of remnant vegetation containing endangered regional ecosystems within the region and an appropriate contribution is made towards the achievement of a net gain in bushland koala habitat within the region.

We know that one of the key ways this can be achieved is through the identification of priority areas in the landscape for koala conservation. Mapping will not only inform where priority areas should be but also identify threats, opportunities and constraints. The Noosa koala corridor pilot is a great example of this—a collaborative project that will rehabilitate core koala habitat within the Noosa hinterland, enhancing and linking fragmented habitat. Exotic pine plantations within Yurol and Ringtail state forests will be re-established as native forest providing important koala habitat and connecting existing koala habitat in the region.

The Yurol and Ringtail state forests connect core koala habitat between the Tewantin section of Noosa National Park to the south and Cooloola to the north-east. The minister's motion to dedicate parts of the Yurol and Ringtail state forests to national park is important in ensuring a network of interconnected koala habitat is maintained to sustain South-East Queensland's koala population over the long term. I commend the motion to the House.