




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 15 May 2019

MOTION

Revocation of State Forest Areas and Dedication of Protected Area

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (2.47 pm): I move—

1. That this House requests the Governor in Council to:
 - (a) revoke by regulation the setting apart and declaration of parts of two State forests; and
 - (b) dedicate by regulation the revoked areas of the aforementioned State forests as national park;under section 30 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 as set out in the Proposal tabled by me in the House today, viz—

Description of areas to be revoked

Yurol State Forest	An area of about 284.4 hectares, as illustrated on the attached “Yurol State Forest revocation: sketch A”.
Ringtail State Forest	An area of about 72.99 hectares, as illustrated on the attached “Ringtail State Forest revocation: sketch B”.

Description of area to be dedicated

Tewantin National Park	An area of about 357.39 hectares, as illustrated on the attached “Tewantin National Park addition: sketch C”.
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2. That Mr Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament forward a copy of this resolution to the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts for submission to the Governor in Council.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to a strong and expansive protected area estate that represents and protects Queensland’s unique flora and fauna and commercial interests. Since 2015, in Queensland protected areas have increased by over one million hectares, up from 7.56 per cent to 8.22 per cent of the state. At the 2017 state election, the government committed to release and implement a Queensland protected area strategy, including a continued nature refuge program and expanded NatureAssist toolkit to support landowners. Since being re-elected we have established a new tenure category called ‘special wildlife reserves’ that provide national park level protections for private land with significant ecological value. Despite the significant benefit to all Queenslanders in protecting and conserving our culture and environment, and providing incentives for private investment to assist the expansion of the protected area network, those opposite voted against the legislation.

The proposal before the House is for the revocation of about 284.4 hectares from Yurol State Forest and about 72.99 from Ringtail State Forest which are located about 14 kilometres north-west of Tewantin. It is proposed for the areas to be dedicated as national park and added to Tewantin National Park. The Yurol and Ringtail state forests upgrade project is the first of its kind in Queensland and demonstrates the government’s continued commitment to a balanced outcome for conservation and public benefit, delivering significant regional environmental, social and economic benefits.

This \$3.5 million investment to retire the land from plantation forestry for conservation purposes is being jointly funded by the Department of Environment and Science, Noosa Shire Council and Noosa Parks Association. Not only does the proposal contribute to the Palaszczuk government's commitments to increase the protected area estate in Queensland, it also delivers further protection to our native flora and fauna, including the koala.

We have established the Queensland Koala Advisory Council which is working with the department to develop the new koala conservation strategy and will play an important role in its implementation. In December 2018 new koala habitat mapping was introduced to update the essential habitat mapping under the Vegetation Management Act 1999, identifying an additional 190,000 hectares of high-quality koala habitat in South-East Queensland that will be better managed to prevent the loss of biodiversity.

The Koala Expert Panel's recommendations focus on a coordinated approach of different measures that, when combined, are effective at reducing the decline in koala populations. Before plantation establishment, these forestry areas supported regional ecosystems that are now endangered and of concern in South-East Queensland. Given their habitat values for koalas and other species of wildlife, the protection and restoration of these forestry areas will provide significant biodiversity benefits.

The addition of about 375.39 hectares to Tewantin National Park will conserve endangered and of concern regional ecosystems, high and very high riverine wetland values and enhance a significant vegetation corridor containing essential habitat for 25 threatened species and three near threatened species, including the giant barred frog, the Richmond birdwing butterfly, the Mary River cod and, of course, the iconic koala. The koala is listed under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992 as vulnerable across its entire range in Queensland. Evidence of continued declines has led the Palaszczuk government to heavily focus our koala conservation efforts on eight coastal local government areas from Noosa to the Gold Coast.

In this case, we have worked collaboratively with the Noosa Shire Council, Noosa Parks Association Inc. and HQPlantations Pty Ltd to transfer land from plantation forestry to protected area. This is further evidence that this Labor government is willing to explore innovative partnerships for the betterment of conservation and the Queensland community. This partnership model has the potential for broad uptake amongst local government, industry and rural enterprise sectors to identify and implement priorities for koala habitat protection and restoration on state lands.

The proposal is the first phase of converting sections of both Yurol and Ringtail state forests to protected area status in a series of stages that reflect current vegetation conditions and land use. This staged approach will allow timber harvesting to be phased out over approximately five years and increased protection and restoration activities to begin as soon as possible. Once complete, it is expected that an extra 2,400 hectares of habitat will be protected for future generations.

Subject to the surrender of the plantation licence over part of Ringtail State Forest, access to this area is proposed to be granted to the Noosa & District Landcare group, in partnership with Queensland Koala Crusaders and the Body Shop to undertake a significant tree planting project. I understand that Noosa Shire Council is prepared to commit ongoing funding from its environment levy and Noosa Parks Association Inc. will look at both funding and community based project support with groups such as Noosa & District Landcare.

Over the next five years other opportunities may arise for conservation groups and industry to undertake restoration works over areas affected by harvesting activities in readiness for these areas to be afforded the highest level of protection available in this state. Yurol and Ringtail state forests adjoin sections of Tewantin National Park and form a link between Tuchekei and Great Sandy national parks.

These state forests are within a regional and state significant south-east-north-west coastal terrestrial corridor that connects to the Mary River riparian bioregional corridor, linking remnant tracts of vegetation and providing coast-to-inland connectivity. The protection of the remnant vegetation areas of these state forests and the restoration of pine plantation areas with native species will create an extensive koala corridor which will help safeguard the koala in the Sunshine Coast region.

I commend and thank the organisations and individuals within the Noosa Shire Council, Noosa Parks Association and HQPlantations who worked with officers in my department for their role in designing and delivering this landmark partnership. In particular, I acknowledge Mayor Tony Wellington who has demonstrated an incredible commitment to this project and Dr Michael Gloster OAM, president of the Noosa Parks Association, who saw the opportunity to protect this important habitat. I also thank David West, group manager stewardship at HQPlantations, for demonstrating exceptional corporate citizenship in partnering with the council, Noosa Parks Association and the government to get this great win for the community, our threatened species and, importantly, the koalas in the northern Sunshine Coast hinterland.

The proposal will not extinguish or affect native title rights or interests in relation to the land. Indeed, it goes some way toward acknowledging the cultural and spiritual significance of the koala to first nations people and builds upon the foundations we are laying to co-steward our protected area estate with first nations people who have successfully managed country for over 3,000 generations.

I also point out that, as part of a whole-of-government approach, my colleague the Hon. Mark Furner, the minister responsible for forestry, has supported this upgrade from state forest to national park. Essentially, what was previously a mix of commercial native forest, hardwood and softwood plantations will be afforded a high level of protection and significant recreational and environmental protection benefits for generations to come. It is a win-win proposal that warrants support from those on both sides of the House. I commend the motion to the House.