



Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 19 September 2019

MOTION

Revocation of State Forest Area

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (5.44 pm): I move—

1. That this House requests the Governor in Council to revoke by regulation under section 26 of the Forestry Act 1959 the setting apart and declaration as State Forest of the area as set out in the Proposal tabled by me in the House today, viz

Description of area to be revoked

Murray Upper State
Forest

An area of 6.497 hectares described as lot 190 on SP218278, as illustrated on the attached "Murray Upper State Forest revocation: Sketch A".

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 sustainable forestry estate that balances resource use with the protection of the environmental, social and cultural values it contains. I am very proud of this government's commitment and support for First Nations peoples and their rights and desire to pursue economic opportunities while re-establishing cultural ties to the lands of their ancestors.

Queensland has over three million hectares of state forests and timber reserves that are managed in partnership with industry, community and other government stakeholders. Queensland's state forests and timber reserves support a broad variety of purposes in addition to timber and resource harvesting, such as the health, wellbeing and cultural values of all Queenslanders. Many offer opportunities for a diverse range of ecotourism and recreational activities, provide opportunities for connection to country, and contribute to supporting and enriching Queensland's vast conservation network. Accordingly, this government continues to work with communities and industry so that our state forests and timber reserves are afforded appropriate levels of protection and management into the future.

Decisions to revoke state forests are not made lightly. However, there are a number of situations where it is appropriate. This can include for conservation purposes, for example, converting state forest to conservation park or national park to rectify errors in how land has been described, gazetted or used, including boundary adjustments; to allow for the upgrade or expansion of public infrastructure, such as roads and railways; and, on occasion, for commercial or private purposes. I will only support the revocation of land from the forestry estate where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposed use is in the broader public interest and there is no reasonable or practical alternative. This is one such occasion.

This proposal is for the revocation of the setting apart and declaration of 6.5 hectares from Murray Upper State Forest, which is located about 27 kilometres north-west of Cardwell. Murray Upper State Forest, nestled between the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage areas, both of which have outstanding natural, cultural and Indigenous values, is used for many activities in an ecologically sustainable manner.

The Girramay people are the traditional custodians of almost 96,000 hectares of lands and waters around Cardwell, including Murray Upper State Forest. Archaeological evidence indicates continued usage and occupation by Indigenous people of the coastal flood plains, which are also located within the Girramay people's native title area, for at least the past 1,700 to 2,000 years. Archaeological reports record Aboriginal occupation and use of the adjoining upland rainforest area from about 700 years ago, and further evidence from about 2,000 years ago demonstrates that those First Nations people used technically sophisticated methods of processing highly toxic food resources, which continue to be practised by the Girramay people.

By supporting this motion today we are reaffirming the Girramay people's native title rights and interests, traditional lore and customs. We are also supporting their rights to maintain their physical and spiritual connection to country and each other, pursue economic opportunities and re-establish cultural ties to the land—cultural ties that stretch back thousands of generations.

In November 2009, the Girramay people, Cassowary Coast Regional Council and the state of Queensland entered into an Indigenous Land Use Agreement—an ILUA—that identified an area of Murray Upper State Forest for transfer to Aboriginal freehold land under the Aboriginal Land Act 1991. This proposal recognises the Girramay people's native title rights and interests, traditional lore and customs in accordance with these ILUA commitments. Should this motion be supported by the House, the land will be granted to the Aboriginal Land Trust for the benefit of the Girramay people.

It was an honour to be joined by the Girramay representative, Marcia Jerry, during regional parliament in Townsville when I first moved this motion. I was so glad that she could be there to witness part of the process that will see this land returned to the traditional owners who have cared for this country for thousands of generations. Consultation in relation to this revocation has occurred across all affected stakeholders, including with traditional owners, industry and state and local government agencies.

This part of Murray Upper State Forest was under plantation softwood production for some time and was severely damaged by Cyclone Yasi in 2011. Following this devastation, HQPlantations undertook a salvage harvest and recently surrendered its plantation licence on this parcel—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): I am sorry to interrupt, Minister. Members, let us pay the minister the respect that she deserves.

Ms ENOCH: I thank HQPlantations for the recent partial surrender of its plantation licence following the harvesting of plantation timber located in the area. I thank the Hon. Mark Furner, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, for his consent and acceptance of the partial surrender of HQPlantations' plantation licence.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to building and maintaining strong partnerships across industry to deliver on outcomes for our state forests and timber reserves and indeed for our broader environment and economy. To be able to return just a tiny portion of this incredible part of the world to traditional owners as part of an ILUA is truly a great thing for this parliament to do. This revocation demonstrates the Palaszczuk government's commitment to a thriving balance that supports sustainable forestry management and economic opportunities alongside the preservation of environmental, community and cultural values of Queensland. I commend the motion to the House.