




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

MOTION

Revocation and Dedication of Protected Areas

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.47 pm): I, too, rise to speak on the motion. I say at the outset that, on the balance of public interest in my view, I have fallen on the side of supporting this proposal—I am in favour of increasing the environmental assets that we have in our community—but I do so with reservations. I would like to compliment the member for Lockyer on his contribution, because he canvassed many of the things that I would like to talk about.

When the government is responsible for national parks or when it wants to add to them, it is incumbent upon it to manage them properly. I am exercising the authentic voice of a farmer or a grazier whose land adjoins something like the Main Range National Park. The Main Range National Park is partly in my electorate. I share it with the members for Lockyer and Scenic Rim.

Mr McDonald: We're the real greenies.

Mr LISTER: I do not know if I will take that interjection or not! I know that country, and it is a very onerous matter to maintain national parks in accordance with their spirit—that is, to be pristine, to be representative of natural floral and animal life—and we do not see that. It is my great fear that this addition to the Main Range National Park will be forgotten once it has been allocated, and I fear that the government measures its success and touts its success by the volume or area of national park, not by how well it is managed.

I would like to make a number of observations about what the member for Cooper said. I would like it to be rightly understood that in doing so I make no reflection on the chair, because I do like the chair, and I also like the member for Cooper, but I do disagree with what she said. I heard a torrent of soaring talk about the Labor Party being the party that looks after our environmental assets and how 'my constituents in Cooper always tell me that they're really concerned about the environment. They want to see more national parks', and so forth. I invite the member for Cooper, and as many of her constituents as she can muster, to come and talk to one of the landowners who have to coexist next to a national park.

I ask members of this House if they know how hard it is to identify someone in the department of environment or in the department of resources, depending on if it is a state forest or a national park, who is responsible for a common dividing fence. One could exercise a lifetime with the bureaucracy of trying to find that person. If you have a neighbour who wants a fence you have to pay half the cost of a reasonable fence. Try putting that across to the department who I would have to say are the worst neighbour in the world.

These national parks and state forests are awash with all sorts of nasties: wild pigs, which do a lot of damage to crops and hurt the economic interests of the communities that I represent; wild dogs that prey on calves and lambs and do enormous damage to the economic situation of some of the people I represent; and deer that run through people's vineyards or across people's crops or are hit by

your car. Try hitting a fallow doe on the Texas Road and see what that does to your car. We never hear about this from the Labor government. We also have floral pests. In my neck of the woods there is Johnson grass, harissa cactus, boxthorn and blackberry. These are abundant in some of the state forests and national parks. We have lovegrass all over the place now thanks to the generosity of the state government.

These areas must be managed properly. When the member for Cooper says 'Oh, my electorate is in favour of the environment. They want to see more of these national parks. They want to see us doing more and having more of the national environment preserved', it needs to be more than just rhetoric. It cannot just be a torrent of talk about improving the environment, it has to mean something. I say again to the House that if anybody doubts that, I suggest they visit a farmer whose property adjoins the boundary of state government land. I know a number of my colleagues would agree with me. I am sure that the member for Gympie, the member for Condamine and the member for Lockyer would agree with me. Anybody who does live beside a national park or a state forest knows what I am talking about.

I urge the state government to take its responsibilities in respect of this addition to the national park seriously. I urge them to properly resource the containment of weeds and invasive pests. I urge them to properly manage the fuel load there. When we had a fire in that neck of the woods it closed Cunninghams Gap for two weeks. Does anybody in this House understand what the economic implications of that are for my electorate? I know the member for Scenic Rim certainly does, as does the member for Lockyer. We share that area.

The rural fire brigade operators in my electorate, and I am sure I speak for the member for Scenic Rim and the member for Lockyer as well, know that area like the back of their hand. Many have been in the service of the rural fire brigade for 50-odd years. They have never seen our state forests and national parks more poorly maintained as they are now, especially in relation to access to trails for fire trucks and fuel loads. I do not know why the state government resists this, but fuel loads build up and when a bushfire passes through a national park and state forest with excess fuel far more damage is done to the natural environment than if it had been cleared on a regular basis with fuel reduction burns and so forth. This is not happening in the state forests and national parks in our state. I say again, a torrent of talk, a soaring rhapsody about the environment and increasing the amount of national park we have means nothing if it becomes a haven for pests of all descriptions and a fire hazard, not only to the environment itself but also to the people whom I represent that neighbour the state forests and national parks.

In respect of this particular acquisition and incorporation to the Main Range National Park I say to the minister, through the chair, please ensure that the resourcing for the maintenance of the Main Range National Park is sufficient to eradicate pests under the Biodiversity Act, as all landowners seem to do—although the state government thinks it is exempt from that—to keep it clear of fuel and to make sure that the fencing of it and the relationship that it holds with the neighbours of that state forest or national park are dealt with with respect and care.