



Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

MOTION

Revocation and Dedication of Protected Areas

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (4.31 pm): Dedicating these lots as the new Main Range Conservation Park and adding to the existing Main Range National Park represents fairly minor administrative changes, so the opposition will be supporting the motion. The member for Lockyer will be making some comments as the local MP, but the area in question straddles Southern Downs and Scenic Rim as well. None of these members had any concerns about the changes but will rise to speak on the motion. Main Range National Park and Glen Rock State Forest as they currently stand are popular amongst locals and regional travellers around Queensland. I have no doubt that, like many of our parks in reasonable driving distance from Brisbane, that has only increased since COVID.

Glen Rock adjoins the world-heritage listed Main Range National Park. They offer Queenslanders a chance to enjoy the incredible lifestyle and landscapes we are so lucky to have in our state through bushwalking, camping, horse riding and mountain bike riding. Main Range itself covers over 30,000 hectares. Transferring much of Glen Rock under Main Range will add to the value of this conservation park, the biodiversity aspects of which the minister has just run through in great detail so I will not repeat them.

The LNP will support any action to protect and better manage our parks. Again, we have no issues with this motion. This does give me an opportunity to talk more broadly about our protected areas estate. As I have highlighted many times, we continue to be disappointed by this government's management of our parks, particularly its lacklustre record on expanding and better managing Queensland's protected areas estate. Not only are many of our parks crying out for better management and resourcing, particularly to combat things like invasive pests and bushfire risks, but we are also waiting to see some defined plans for how the government plans to get to its own protected areas target. That target is of course 17 per cent of Queensland's land area, set way back in 2015.

The last two budgets showed just a 0.01 per cent increase in protected areas each year. At the moment, Queensland's protected area is sitting at around 8.25 per cent, which is not even halfway towards the 17 per cent target. That is why I think members of the government talk in hectares and not percentages when talking about the increase to our protected area. When I asked at estimates this year, it was clear that there were no timeframes in place to reach their target. Even the director-general said that it is a long-term ambition. We would think they would come up with some five- or 10-year interim plans or a broader map to show how we will get there. No, there is no plan even to get to 10 per cent and certainly no plan to get to 17 per cent. We could not even get a hectare figure on their wish list of individual properties—just a total amount of what their wish list is for protected areas to acquire.

If the government keep increasing this at 0.01 per cent each year, they will reach their own target in over 800 years. I reckon they will still be blaming the Newman government even then! Again, there is no point in having these targets if you are never going to reach them. Queenslanders want genuine action to protect our environment. They want to see actual change made and not just more strategies that never get us anywhere.

This government postures and loves nothing more than to point to Canberra and say, 'Look at them' or to blame a government which left office in Queensland seven years ago, but it is all just to disguise the very little action that they are taking in this space.

The LNP wants to see our environment protected. Conservation is a fundamental value of ours. We need more than just brochures, more than announcements and more than targets which are only talked about and never delivered. We want to see actual outcomes for our environment.