




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Protected Area Estate

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (7.34 pm): We are often told as politicians that we need to look beyond the election cycles—that we should be making policies which focus on where our state needs to be in the long term and that we need to have a bit of vision around where we are going. The environment minister has taken this to another level, with a delivery time frame of a millennia to achieve the government's own protected area target. That is not me saying it. It is from a new report by key Queensland environmental groups. The Queensland Conservation Council, the Wilderness Society, the National Parks Association of Queensland and Pew Charitable Trusts have found 'if expansion remains at this rate of growth, it will take more than 1,000 years to reach 17%'. I table a copy of the report for the benefit of members.

Tabled paper: Report, dated November 2021, titled 'Summary of protected area growth & investment: Delivery of Queensland's protected area strategy one year on' [2037](#).

In just two weeks we have also had a report from the waste industry saying Queensland will not reach our recycling and recovery targets under the government's current policy settings and an Auditor-General's report casting serious doubts over whether the government will reach their renewable energy targets, highlighting that seven years after setting it they are still only just putting together a plan to achieve it. Currently, just 8.26 per cent of Queensland's land area is protected. That is the lowest proportion of any state or territory in Australia. In 2015, the government committed to increase that to 17 per cent, but their progress on delivering this has been abysmal.

A year ago, the government released their 10-year strategy, but since then progress has actually slowed on increasing our protected area estate. Queensland's protected areas are increasing by just 0.01 per cent a year. That is directly from the budget papers. It is an indisputable indicator of their lack of delivery. This figure is listed as a performance measure in the Service Delivery Statements, so I will not be surprised if the minister amends it or removes it completely next year.

I suspect they will do what they normally do when announcing their limited examples of action in this space: they will talk about the number of hectares. That means nothing without context. The percentage is what is important. You cannot talk about how our current estate is bigger than Tasmania because Tasmania is only a tiny fraction of the land area of Queensland—just three per cent of the size of our state, or 68,000 square kilometres compared to 1.85 million square kilometres.

The management of the land already classified as protected is also lacking resources. For private protected areas, it is just 25 cents per hectare per year. Landholders need more support. That is the only way they will take part in this. New South Wales by comparison spends around \$90 million a year. That is over 10 times the amount invested by Queensland's Labor government.

We need to increase Queensland's protected area estate and that needs to be done hand in hand with better resourcing and better management of what is already protected, particularly our national parks. This Labor government is failing on both measures.

(Time expired)