




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MOTION

Revocation and Dedication of Protected Areas and State Forest Areas (Cognate Debate)

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (11.30 am): I rise to make my contribution to this revocation motion. The proposed revocation of about 10 hectares from Beerburrum East State Forest and about 19 hectares from Beerburrum West State Forest is to allow for the construction and delivery of the Nambour rail upgrade project stage 1. The project is planned to improve the freight and passenger connection between Brisbane and Cairns to help alleviate pressure on the Bruce Highway, the backbone of our transport infrastructure for Queensland. Stage 1 will include the realignment of Steve Irwin Way for approximately one kilometre to allow for duplication and straightening of the rail corridor, upgrades to the Landsborough station car park facility and expansion of the Nambour park-and-ride facility. The project will have benefits for Queenslanders by indirectly reducing congestion, reducing travel times and allowing safer passage for travellers.

The revocation is not considered to present significant impacts upon conservation values of the forestry estate as most of the land within the revocation footprint is cleared or ecologically disturbed and much of the revocation area is surrounded by plantation forestry areas or land tenures that allow for land uses that present limited ecological connectivity. The Department of Environment and Science has also negotiated with the Department of Transport and Main Roads to determine an appropriate compensation package for the loss of state forest area in accordance with departmental policy.

With regard to the Watalgan State Forest, the proposed revocation of around 18 hectares is to allow for the construction of a dam on the adjoining freehold land that will inundate part of the state forest due to the land's topography. The dam will provide much needed water security for the businesses of Tom and Robert Gorton, whom we have heard about, from Sunny Bluff Produce which consists of fruit tree orchards. The proposed dam will contribute to further investment into the agricultural economy of the Bundaberg region and will provide further employment opportunities during harvest seasons. The department has negotiated suitable environmental offset and compensation packages.

In relation to Oakview State Forest, the proposed revocation of about 92 hectares from Oakview State Forest for dedication as additions to the existing Oakview National Park is in recognition of the conservation value of these lands. The upgrade area contains a hoop pine plantation that forms part of the natural forest structure for the area and provides crucial habitat for threatened fauna and flora species.

In relation to Mount Etna Caves National Park, the proposed revocation of 0.1187 hectares from Mount Etna Caves National Park will allow for the rectification of road encroachments on the national park. The issues were revealed when Livingstone Shire Council commissioned a road corridor identification survey in 2017 which raised possible liability and safety issues for the department and council. The revocation is expected to have minimal impacts on Mount Etna Caves National Park. As

part of the proposal, the council is assisting with the closure of an undeveloped suitably vegetated portion of the road reserve for dedication as part of the national park, resulting in a net conservation gain to the protected area estate.

Finally, in relation to Conondale National Park, the proposed revocation of about 41 hectares from Conondale National Park to be dedicated as Conondale Resources Reserve is to facilitate the assessment of proposed geotechnical investigations on these areas that are associated with the Borumba pumped hydro project. The Palaszczuk government recently released the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan—a visionary plan to set up Queensland for the next century with green energy. Included in the plan is our new Queensland SuperGrid that will connect solar, wind, battery and hydrogen generators across the state and transform Queensland into a world-leading renewable energy capital. Pumped hydro energy storage schemes are recognised as a reliable and lucrative method for generating renewable energy. The Energy and Jobs Plan will deliver a 50 per cent reduction in electricity sector emissions on 2005 levels by 2030 and a 90 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2035-36 and support the creation of 100,000 new jobs, as the Premier said. The proposed Borumba Dam location was selected as the first site for a detailed design and cost analysis due to its close proximity to the high-voltage transmission network and existing dam infrastructure.

The proposal to temporarily downgrade part of Conondale National Park to resources reserve will allow the chief executive of the department to formally assess the application for this activity under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. The preliminary works are not expected to cause permanent or irreversible impacts to the protected area estate. The intention of these areas would be rededicated as national park when the investigation is complete and the areas rehabilitated. Queensland Hydro has been undertaking detailed design, cost analysis and consultation with the local community and is in pre-lodgement discussions for the project to be assessed as a coordinated project requiring an environmental impact statement. I commend the motion to the House.