




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.54 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill contains a lot of common sense but, in thinking deeply about it, it is also a bill about transition. It is useful to reflect on this transition over the last 20 years.

Firstly, I thank the committee for the work they have done on this bill and also our secretariat. We really enjoyed examining this bill, and I thank the minister for that. We did meet some amazing and dedicated people within the industry. I acknowledge Jo and Jacob from the Beekeepers' Association who are here in the gallery today. I also give a shout-out to Charlie, the bee man, from Pomona who I met through the community in Deception Bay. He is another great advocate for the industry.

We did learn a lot about the industry. The committee made two recommendations: clearly that the bill be passed and, secondly, to make sure that we do everything we can over the next 20 years to get the land resources that are needed by the industry and that can be dedicated to the industry.

I talked about common sense before. Here are some things that we do know. We do need the extra 20 years to get this right. The hives, as we have heard, were there on lands that were part of state forests before they became national parks. The minister has addressed how we need to work—and have started to work—over the next 20 years to secure the land resources that are needed for the successful continuation of this industry.

Another thing we know is that these sites in national parks are of great benefit to the industry. As we have heard, it gives bees an opportunity to rest from their productiveness and it gives them an opportunity to access a range of floral resources that make them healthier. As we have heard, there is no insecticide in these areas so, once again, that contributes to happy and healthy hives.

Something else that we know and that became apparent during the examination of this bill is the benefits of the beekeeping industry to agriculture. As we have heard, we have this relatively new crop in Australia of almonds. They 100 per cent rely on bees to pollinate this crop. As we have heard, nearly 300,000 hives are needed to service this particular industry. In Queensland, avocados 100 per cent rely on bees to pollinate to produce fruit. The pollination services that this industry delivers create over \$2.1 billion in value to our agricultural industry.

We also know that the principles behind national parks are important, and that is the preservation of the natural condition of Queensland's natural estate. We are talking about the purpose of conservation. National parks are not there just to generate an economic return. They are not there just for recreation purposes. They are not there just to service our agricultural industries.

During the examination of this bill we were given an example of where commercial or feral bees in national parks may be in conflict with some animals who need those nesting hollows. We have heard that science is yet unsure of the impact of feral bee colonies in those areas. No doubt there will be some more work done on that in future years.

Having said all of that, we have seen that the beekeeping industry has minimal impact on our natural estate. We have seen them use existing tracts and existing clearings. As we have heard, there are currently nearly 1,000 sites in national parks. I have talked about why we know this bill is full of common sense, but this bill also highlights that we have gone through a state of transition over the last 20 to 30 years. One of those transitions has been how we treat national parks. Ever since the Goss government back in the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a greater emphasis on protecting our natural estate. Under Labor governments we have seen more national parks declared, we have seen more land purchased to become national parks and more high-value state forest converted to national parks. That is a real transition, increasing the natural estate in Queensland and making sure it is used for conservation purposes.

Another part of the transition we have seen is the pressure on our natural estate, our natural areas. We know that the value of extractive resources is going up all over the world. Companies all over Queensland are looking for more ways to extract minerals and other resources from our land. We know about the pressures on forestry. We have heard the forestry industry talk about their need to secure access to hardwood resources and how they want to keep our state forests open so they can extract those resources. We have seen pressures especially in South-East Queensland. With the expansion of our urban footprint, we have seen that some of our best natural areas are needed for urban development. We know there have been some big bites and small bites taken out of that natural estate within South-East Queensland, but every bite puts pressure on the beekeeping industry and other similar industries.

Today we have heard about other pressures we may not have foreseen. We know that people love camping in our natural areas and national parks and we look at the pressures we are seeing on K'gari, Fraser Island. In fact, there is so much pressure that we now have people impersonating rangers in order to move people on from favoured camping sites, which is quite astonishing. We are now at a point where we need a law specifying that impersonating a ranger is now an offence. There are increasing pressures throughout Queensland. One of the things that we do know is that bees create \$64 million in honey production each year, and that contributes \$2.1 million to \$2.4 billion to our agriculture sector. The agriculture sector is worth \$23 billion to our economy. This bill does contain a lot of common sense, but it is also wise to reflect on the transitions that are putting pressure on industries such as beekeeping.

I want to conclude by addressing the LNP amendment that the member for Bonney circulated. I want people to understand that if that amendment is passed it would open up national parks in perpetuity forever. That does clash with the cardinal principle of national parks; that is, nature conservation. I want to address the primary purpose of national parks. The worldwide arbiter for protected areas categories is the International Union for Conservation of Nature. That defines category 2 protected areas, national parks, as protected areas that are large, natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes along with a compliment of species and ecosystems characteristic of that area.

The primary objective of a national park is to protect natural biodiversity along with its underlying ecological structure. That is an internationally accepted framework for national park management. An amendment such as this, even though its intentions are good, has broad and unknown implications for the management of national parks across all industries across this state. I do not know if members opposite have considered the implications of such an amendment, but I want to point out that this amendment has broad and unknown implications at this stage. I commend the bill to the House.