



Speech By  
**Samuel O'Connor**


**MEMBER FOR BONNEY**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2022

**MOTION**

**Revocation and Dedication of Protected Areas**

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.52 pm): As the shadow environment minister, I will confirm that the Liberal National Party does not oppose this motion for the revocation and dedication of protected areas. This will see 664 hectares of Ringtail and Yurol state forests converted for conservation in Tewantin National Park. With the popular Mount Tinbeerwah, Tewantin National Park gives incredible views of the coast and mountains, plenty of mountain bike trails as well as rock climbing and abseiling at Grab Rock. The transfer of these state forests to national park will protect this important corridor and the koala habitat it contains.

This has been part of a broader project with the local council since 2015 so it is good to see more progress made with these state forests transitioning to become national parks and for the wider area to be protected. We welcome the collaboration with Noosa council, the traditional owners—the Kabi Kabi people—businesses and local environmental groups.

While the minister has tried to sell this over the last couple of weeks as a new announcement, we know this motion today is part of a longer term project that was started a number of years ago. In fact, the minister went so far as to do what was basically a cut and paste of a Facebook post by the former environment minister announcing exactly the same thing—koala cuddling and all. On 7 November 2018, the former environment minister announced the protection of 2,400 hectares of koala habitat. Then, on 17 May 2022, the current environment minister redid the same photo-op and again announced the government was turning 2,400 hectares of former pine plantation in Noosa into national park. I will table both of these posts for members to see the amazing announcement recycling we have seen from the environment minister.

*Tabled paper.* Social media posts by the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, Hon. Meaghan Scanlon, dated 17 May, and the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts, Hon. Leeanne Enoch, dated 7 November 2018, in relation to the creation of protected areas in Noosa [712](#).

Is this the minister's way of trying to make it look like the government is doing more to grow our protected area estate? We know from the last state budget that our estate is only increasing by 0.01 per cent a year. I would like the minister to answer this in her summing-up speech: by what percentage will this 664 hectares increase Queensland's protected area estate? We know from the last state budget that just 8.26 per cent of Queensland is protected—the lowest percentage of any state or territory in Australia and less than half way towards the government's 17 per cent commitment that they made around seven years ago. Many environmental and conservation groups have said it will take many centuries for this government to reach their own target. Minister, where are we at? What percentage of Queensland's precious natural environment is classified as protected?

As I said in my contribution to the last motion for revocation and dedication of protected areas, the LNP will support any action to better protect and manage our parks, but we want to see improvements in the conservation and management of our parks in addition to any expansion of our

estate. The state government needs to do more to manage the weeds running rampant in many of our national parks. Significant work must be undertaken to better eliminate pests and feral animals from our protected areas to make sure they are living up to what their name says they are. We see so little investment that fire trails are barely accessible and so little is being invested to manage our private protected areas that we have no idea what is happening to areas that have already been classified as protected.

Like I said earlier, around seven years ago the government set itself a target for growth, yet it seems to have no measurables as to what is already protected and no projected time line for that growth. The department cannot even tell us which properties or how many properties they are looking to acquire. It is because this government cares more about how things look instead of how they actually are. The data does not lie. The lack of priority this government puts on genuine environmental action is startling.

The Queensland state Labor government have set the lowest 2030 emission reduction targets of any state or territory in Australia and they are not even on track to reach those targets. On the latest available greenhouse gas inventories Queensland emissions have gone up since the Palaszczuk government were elected in 2015. For the benefit of the members opposite, I repeat that emissions have gone up under their government. They are not even halfway towards achieving their 30 per cent reduction. The Newman government presided over lower carbon emissions than that mob.

They love to make an announcement to get some good content for their socials, but the people on the ground, in particular in regional Queensland, are not seeing better outcomes for our environment. They are not seeing proper management. They worry about the impact this will have especially when it comes to the next fire season. Everywhere I travel across Queensland, people tell me that the worst neighbour people can have is the state government. They are sick of dealing with fire risks and weeds and pests from national parks next door to them. This under-resourcing of management is not good enough for these primary producers and landholders, and it is certainly not good enough for the precious ecologies and biodiversity of these protected areas. We need real progress and care to be taken. I will continue to call out the minister until I see it happen.

The other part dealt with by this motion—the revocations at Castle Tower National Park and Mount Coolum National Park—are understandable. At Castle Tower National Park it is a relatively small revocation to allow for the raising of the height of the Awoonga Dam wall. While the minister has provided very little detail about this before today, to see Labor do anything towards providing improved water security is a rare thing so we do not see any issues with the motion in that regard. The revocation at Mount Coolum National Park allows for flood mitigation. Given the weather we have seen this year, the need to safeguard infrastructure like the Sunshine Coast Airport is also a necessity. Again, we do not oppose this motion, but we urge this third-term government to put more emphasis on delivery instead of announcements or reannouncements.