




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Burnett Electorate, Miara Development

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (7.23 pm): Today I speak on behalf of the township of Miara in my electorate. They are looking down the barrel of a development that is threatening essential habitat and 100-year-old trees. On behalf of the residents, I am asking the minister to call in this residential development as a matter of urgency to protect environmental state interests. It is noted that there are serious discrepancies found between the DA form 1 and the DA form 2. I cannot stress how important this is as there are plans by the developer to start clearing shortly. This development needs to better reflect the diversity of the region. I want to say that the community is not against development; they just want it done right.

I need to paint a picture of why this area is so significant. This historical estate was first created in 1884. This area was to be the township of Miara, with the aim being to house families working in the sugar mill and timber mill industries. Sadly, but not unlike many in bygone eras, both industries closed down—the sugar mill in 1908 and the timber mill in 1958.

When this development was undertaken, the land was unimproved and one of the last remnant tracts of old-growth trees. Now, 125 years later, the vegetation has regenerated and it contains flora and fauna that is 80 to 100 years old. The current proposal will remove 90 per cent of the vegetation and displace all manner of flora and fauna. Old-growth trees are essential ecosystems for life. Not only do they fix large quantities of atmospheric CO₂ and create microclimates and irreplaceable habitats, they also are an important part of our communities and our combined cultural heritage. This is an historical area and it is important that we give this area the appreciation it deserves.

Under the development assessment mapping system, the entire estate in question is classed as essential habitat. This vegetation falls under categories A and B, containing endangered and vulnerable ecosystems. Category X on the regulated management map encompasses only the control of vegetation on current infrastructure and power line easements. The proposed earthworks for this development mean that this habitat will be lost and the Kolan River will suffer irreversible damage due to siltation.

Tonight I am asking for the minister's help. I am asking Minister Miles to call in this development as being in the public interest to protect the environmental state interests in this area. We have written to the minister's office this week and we hope this can be accommodated. The Planning Act 2016 is the principal law regulating planning and development in Queensland. It provides the framework for local governments. As stated in *The Queensland Law Handbook*, no previous development application can supersede this legislation. In the context of the law, the historical zoning and planning is therefore in question. I want to reiterate to those in the area that we do acknowledge that you are not against all development and that this area can be developed and probably should. However, because of the river ways, the waterways and, more importantly, the diversity of the vegetation, we believe this should be called in and reviewed. We ask SARA and other agencies to give this review due diligence.