




Speech By
Tony Perrett

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2023

MOTION

Revocation and Dedication of Protected Areas

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (6.08 pm): I rise to speak on this revocation and dedication of protected areas motion, which deals with a range of areas regarding the Great Sandy Marine Park, several state forests and timber reserves. Specifically, it will revoke by regulation the setting apart and declaration of the entirety of one timber reserve, one state forest and parts of four state forests. It will dedicate them as conservation parks, as part of a conservation park, and as an addition to one existing national park. The areas listed in this motion include: Wickham Timber Reserve, Beerwah State Forest, Deer Reserve State Forest, West Cooroy State Forest, Luttons State Forest and Mount Mee State Forest.

Wickham National Park has a history of native timber harvesting. Deer Reserve was originally set aside as a timber reserve in 1912 with hoop pine plantations. West Cooroy State Forest had plantation coops to meet Queensland's contracted hardwood sawlog supply commitments. Beerwah State Forest was originally established in 1874 as a reserve for state forest purposes, including selective native timber harvesting. According to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website—

The area was being considered for selective timber harvesting in 2022 to meet long-term supply contracts.

All of these forests and reserves are located within the South East Queensland Regional Plan area. When the Premier announced the Native Timber Action Plan in November 2019—four years ago—she announced that hardwood timber forestry harvesting would end in the South-East Queensland plan south of Noosa in 2024. This was originally envisioned by Labor's 1999 South East Queensland Forests Agreement. The Premier said—

... a commitment has been made to progressively hand back up to 20,000 hectares of land to become conservation estate before 2024.

Despite many of these areas having been part of our timber history, Minister Furner said it would be the department of environment which would identify the 20,000 hectares of state owned land for transition. Minister Furner also said—

This will take into account the State's native timber supply commitments under existing sales permits and other potential constraints on tenure.

When the Premier promised to hand back those parcels of land, she also promised to undertake 'a comprehensive two-year study to identify sustainable future options for timber supply, including on private land'. That study was due in November 2021. We have heard nothing. It is now two years overdue.

The government needs to ensure balance when it locks up these reserves. The reserves must be well-managed. It is self-defeating if they are left to become fire hazards and riddled with invasive pests and weeds. We also need to find alternative sources of timber to cater for the loss of supply from these areas. As Queensland continues to grow, we need increased supplies of timber for construction

and to address the housing crisis. You cannot address the housing crisis without ensuring long-term and affordable supplies of timber. Our current timber supply shortages are a direct result of 24 years of policy failures by successive Labor governments.

These regulations represent the government's reduction of native timber forestry in these areas. This year Dr Tyron Venn of the University of Queensland found that reducing native title forestry would have 'negative impacts' to 'conserve biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions due to increased consumption of timber imports and carbon polluting substitutes'. DAF contributed to Dr Venn's research, yet Minister Furner had no answer during estimates about whether he asked the federal government to ensure imported timber was sourced from countries with sustainable forestry practices. It is clear that he did not. It makes sense to produce our own. Timber is a renewable resource.

Locking up these forests is being done in the name of conservation. The Premier says the high cost of structural timber is impacting the housing crisis, yet we learned during estimates that Queensland has no plan to increase supplies of structural timber. When asked whether Queensland needs to grow its current forest footprint to reduce the reliance on imported timber, DAF's director-general said, 'I do not know how to answer the question.'

A November 2022 cost-benefit analysis by Indufor and Natural Capital Economics showed that South-East Queensland state forests used for sustainable harvesting produce higher combined environmental, social and economic benefits than if they were managed as national parks. While I do not oppose this motion, this must be about balancing the needs of conservation, the proper management and maintenance of state owned land, resource sustainability and ensuring long-term supplies of timber for our future needs.