




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Parks, Investment

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Innovation) (10.24 am): The Miles government knows that Queensland families are struggling with national cost-of-living pressures and rising household bills. That is why we are taking \$1,000 off the power bills of Queenslanders. It is another reason why the investment in our national parks is so important. Not only do Queensland's national parks have some of the most spectacular natural attractions and cultural sites in Australia but also our low overnight camping fees provide cost-effective holiday options for Queensland families, interstate visitors and international visitors alike.

I take this moment to acknowledge that some of our Indigenous rangers from across Queensland are in the gallery right now, as well as Patrick and his team from Country Needs People. I give them a warm shout-out for all of the amazing work that they are doing across our beautiful state.

Visitors can enjoy overnight stays in World Heritage areas, beautiful beaches, tropical rainforests and the rugged outback for just \$7.25 per person per night or \$29 per family. In 2023 more than 650,000 visitors enjoyed almost 1.4 million overnight stays in Queensland's parks and forests. The Miles government, through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, is actively upgrading visitor infrastructure facilities to enhance visitor experiences across the state. This financial year we are investing more than \$170 million worth of capital expenditure in our national parks and forests to deliver new land acquisitions, visitor infrastructure, management facilities and plant and equipment to help manage, protect and promote visitation in these areas.

Major capital investment that is currently underway in visitor facilities in our parks includes construction of the brand new Ngaro track multiday hiking track on Whitsunday Island, improvements to Hinchinbrook Island's famous Thorsborne Trail and upgrades to facilities across a number of visitor sites in the beautiful Bunya Mountains National Park. Planning continues for a \$16.4 million investment in visitor sites across the Springbrook National Park, including the iconic Purlingbrook Falls viewing lookouts; a new visitor information hub, visitor amenities and improved visitor parking at Girraween National Park; and finalising designs for the replacement of the Jindalba boardwalk at the Daintree National Park.

The Miles government's record \$262.5 million commitment to expanding protected areas will provide even more low-cost visitor experiences and holiday options when the new land acquisitions transition to national park. For example, the future addition of the lakes north of Hughenden to the protected area estate will support a drive-tourism experience connecting Blackbraes National Park to one of Queensland's most magnificent natural wonders, Porcupine Gorge National Park.

Ms Grace: I'll have to go there.

Ms LINARD: You will have to go there; I take that interjection from the Minister for Infrastructure. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service manages a range of conservation focused attractions across Queensland that provide unique recreation experiences. David Fleay Wildlife Park on the Gold Coast and Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre in Brisbane both offer value-for-money junior ranger programs during school holidays where kids can learn what it is like to be a ranger or a wildlife officer. At Logan, entry to the Daisy Hill Koala Centre, much loved by its local member and our Leader of the House, is free of charge. It allows visitors to see koalas up close and learn about how our Parks and Wildlife Service is protecting that iconic species. All three centres offer various free-of-charge broader recreation opportunities, walks, picnicking and swimming.

Other popular and affordable attractions include the Mon Repos Turtle Centre near Bundaberg and the Chillagoe-Mungana Caves National Park west of Cairns. There are so many opportunities for Queensland families and visitors alike to enjoy the incredible natural and cultural opportunities here in Queensland. I encourage everyone to visit our national parks. To visit them is to love them and want to protect them.