




Speech By
Bree James

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (8.23 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The fundamental purpose of this bill is to ensure our current system has a clear head of power. It establishes a modern and efficient framework for using electronic systems to automatically manage particular low-risk environmental and conservation authorities. We are not making it harder for Queenslanders to get a pet, go into nature or perform other low-risk activities. The intention of this bill is to consolidate our existing online automatic processes for environmental and animal authorities that are low risk in nature. We are removing the ambiguity around permits, animal authorities and the illegal wildlife trade. We are identifying how biodiverse our region is and how we can better plan land use, conservation and investment. We are ensuring our permit systems are fit for purpose.

For my region in Far North Queensland these changes will directly impact everyone from tourism operators to families wanting to enjoy the great outdoors, from pet owners to primary industry producers. Far North Queensland is home to some of the most stunning natural wonders in the world and is one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet. It is also home to dozens of incredible nature reserves. Wooroonooran National Park features the Babinda Boulders, the Daintree rainforest reserve is home to the Mossman Gorge and Barron Gorge National Park is home to our iconic Barron Falls. These are major drawcards to our region for both locals and tourists and many of our nature parks are also home to campgrounds including the Daintree National Park, Babinda Boulders and Goldsborough Valley.

I know firsthand how frustrating the system has been under Labor's watch. I also know how frustrating it is for our parks and wildlife operators. In the 2022-23 financial year alone, there were approximately 546,600 camper nights recorded in protected areas, marking a 20 per cent increase since 2017. This surge underscores the growing popularity of our natural attractions and the pressing need for efficient permit processing systems. Consequential amendments are also proposed to align the online granting of camping permits for protected areas such as national parks with a new legislative framework to ensure a single process for the use of electronic permitting systems under the Nature Conservation Act.

Whilst the bill before the House has a clear scope that is separate to ecotourism regulations, the intent behind the bill sends a clear message that the LNP is focused on keeping processes streamlined and user-friendly. The member for Sandgate said that this bill will do nothing. That shows how out of touch the Labor Party are. When it comes to tourism and small businesses they are completely out of touch because in my region where we have the reef and the rainforest, as you can imagine, most of our tourism operators are dealing with the current legislative drama on a daily basis. FNQ Nature Tours is one of those businesses. They do visits to the Daintree National Park rainforest, Atherton Tablelands, Crater Lakes and Cape Tribulation—all of which requires unnecessary duplication of paperwork.

Billy Tea Safaris provide four-wheel drive tours that explore remote areas, allowing visitors to experience the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the region. I have spoken to the owner, Peppi, who was very distressed last year because the red tape was strangling his business. He has been in

business for 40 years doing these tours and last year he had a huge delay in getting his parks permits approved. This delay impacted his business massively because he could not pre-sell any future tours for the following year as he had always done and he could not even promote the region as they were not sure if their permit would be renewed. This also stalled business growth as without the permit they could not move forward and invest in a new bus valued at \$280,000 and more staff because of this paperwork jam. Peppi had no confidence or certainty for the future of his company with this permit problem and Peppi said to me, 'Thank God the LNP got in otherwise this left-wing agenda of closing parks down would have closed this business in the Daintree.' He has now invested that \$280,000 into a new bus and hired more staff. This bill does matter.

Cairns Adventure Tours is another award-winning business in Cairns with guided tours to the Daintree rainforest and Cape Tribulation. They have experienced similar issues. Our reef operators are also feeling the same strain, with some operators requiring eight permits to do a similar activity. The Minister for the Environment and Tourism, Minister Powell, has committed to getting these state permits down to one and we will be focusing on more reforms later in the year.

I look forward to Minister Powell's future work in this space to help tourism operators obtain necessary approvals promptly. We will continue to reduce the red tape, the green tape and the gaffer tape that is strangling small businesses, especially those in ecotourism. The Premier putting tourism, environment, science and innovation under one portfolio and one incredible minister has made all of the difference to those in tourism particularly. It is fantastic for the industry and it has given a lot of hope that the future is much brighter.

This bill also confirms our efforts to crack down on illegal wildlife trade and protect our biodiverse region and primary industries. In Far North Queensland, many amazing species call our region home. Our commercial fishing industry supports close to 900 full-time jobs and brings in around \$263 million per year. However, we also have a black market of seafood, plants and animal species in our region, so they need to be protected. For communities in Cairns, Cape York, the Torres Strait and the gulf, these changes mean a healthier ecosystem, stronger deterrents for those who harm native animals and a fairness for trade. It also means that there is no grey area when it comes to wildlife smuggling or harming native animals. The proposed amendments will clarify that the enforcement of a notice or order is not limited to a court proceeding and that an infringement notice may be issued. It will help avoid unnecessary costs to both business operators and the regulator whilst also ensuring the environment and community are protected from harm. This bill is important for locals who love the outdoors. It is important for small business owners and tourism operators. I fully support this bill.