




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (7.33 pm): I am not sure where to start after that contribution. I rise to make a short contribution on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I think it would be prudent to point out to the member for Sandgate that her colleagues did not oppose this bill. There was no statement of reservation. This bill could perhaps be better referred to as a mopping-up bill.

After 10 years of decline under Labor, we have simply come in as the incoming government—and I congratulate the minister—and introduced this legislation to seek to modernise the department. We heard the member for Sandgate talk about all the environmental approvals. Yes, there are environmental approvals. I point out that just because the environmental approvals process is being automated, going online and will be electronic does not mean every single environmental application will be approved by a computer. There will still be protocols in the background. There will be certain levels of application that will require a human being to check that everything stacks up and sign off on them, but at least there will be the opportunity to lodge the application electronically and more effectively.

This is about streamlining lots of day-to-day transactions like camping permits in national parks or four-wheel drive access into particular reserves. Normally, the processing of those would be far more costly and there would be a lot more paperwork involved. All we are simply doing, after 10 years of Labor doing nothing, is saying that maybe we should embrace the internet—the interweb. Maybe we should be allowing electronic devices and allowing people access to our national parks and other natural environment in a far simpler, more streamlined and more cost-effective way. We will save the department money and man-hours by introducing simple efficiencies into what was a fairly antiquated and slow way of processing applications.

This is not an empty bill. I have had the honour of chairing the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee for nearly 10 months now. We have dealt with a couple of bills which have been simply mopping up issues from the past. We dealt with the health practitioner national law bill. It included some very simple and commonsense changes that were required to comply with the national law. Queensland was the lead agency in that case. That was left until after the election for us to deal with. This is simply another example of something that was left for 10 years and that could have been dealt with two, three or four years ago and could have made things easier for the citizens of Queensland to get an application approved. Like so many other hard decisions—if one could call this a hard decision—Labor put this off.

Maybe the member for Sandgate is not aware, but we have actually implemented a fairly significant plan for ecotourism across the state. One of the reports that I recall we had to review—again a hangover from the previous government—was the report from the Auditor-General on ecotourism and endangered species. One of the substantive issues there was that the strategic plan had not been done. It was supposed to have been done about three or four years ago. It was put off and then there were some more inquiries. The Auditor-General's office highlighted the fact that the department still had not done the work, which is no surprise, because that is what we have become used to after a decade of

Labor governments that kept putting things off. I congratulate the minister because we now have a plan for ecotourism in this state and we have some great initiatives. We are getting on with finishing the Wangetti Trail in Cairns. What a debacle that has been. I think the original project scoping was \$40 million.

Mr J KELLY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I note the member has made numerous points of order around relevance, yet I have failed to hear much that has been relevant in this contribution at all. I bring your attention to relevance. That is my point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr O'Shea): Member for Southport, I would ask you to stay relevant to the bill we are discussing.

Mr MOLHOEK: I thank the member for Greenslopes for his guidance. I also note that there is no statement of reservation. I am pretty sure those members on the other side of the House supported this legislation without a statement of reservation. I do not see one at the back of the report.

I will go directly to the bill. It is simply a bill to introduce the use of an electronic system for automatically issuing authorities for low-risk activities. Such authorities include those for low-risk wildlife activities such as keeping native animals and pets. The bill aims to maintain the ability to automatically grant certain types of environmental authorities under the Environmental Protection Act through an electronic system. The amendments aim to remove uncertainty regarding the use of electronic systems for automatic authorisations and maximise the use of resources to assess high-risk activities.

The statement of compatibility accompanying the bill notes that the amendment 'will also remove any doubt around the validity of authorities under both the NC Act and the EP Act previously dealt with by an automatic system'. There was some ambiguity about systems and processes previously that were undertaken electronically by the previous government. Part of this bill is simply clarifying that and cleaning up some of the shortcomings of the previous government and the way that the department was functioning under their direction. The bill also contains an amendment to the EP Act to clarify beyond reasonable doubt that penalty infringement notices can be issued for noncompliance with in-force environmental protection orders, direction notices and clean-up notices.

The committee only made one recommendation. Yes, the member for Sandgate is right: it is not the most exciting piece of legislation I have ever seen introduced into this House, but it is an important piece of legislation. It was something that simply needed to be dealt with. That is what the minister has done. I congratulate him for getting on with it early in the piece. I know how busy the minister has been. There has been a lot of other work that he has undertaken across the state in terms of putting in place a really solid strategy around tourism, ecotourism and looking at our national parks and other lapsed projects and failings of the previous government. He made the time to get this legislation prepared, introduced, reviewed and embedded so that the people of Queensland would not be inconvenienced any longer so that systems would be simpler so that we could save the taxpayers of Queensland some money by being more efficient.

Mr Powell: The Treasurer is happy with that.

Mr MOLHOEK: I take that interjection from the member. I am sure the Treasurer is very happy about the fact there are some practical savings and initiatives in the adoption of this legislation. There is so much more I could say. I may just end on that. As the member for Sandgate has pointed out, there is not a lot else to say. We are doing the knitting. We are getting on with the job. This is a very simple piece of legislation. I wholeheartedly commend it to the House. It makes sense. It is going to save the taxpayers of Queensland time and money. That is what an LNP government is about—getting on with the job and delivering for Queenslanders.