

Question on Notice
No. 480
Asked on 19 April 2005

QUESTION:

DR CLARK asked the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle) –

How have the interests of horse riders been recognised in the transfer of State Forests to National Park status in far north Queensland?

ANSWER:

In 2000, this government announced that State forests in the Wet Tropics would be transferred to national park tenure. This commitment was confirmed when the Premier announced in December 2003 that 480,889 hectares of primarily State forest land in the Wet Tropics would be transferred to protected area estate under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, a decision based on the long-term needs of all Queenslanders.

This government has committed to transferring the majority of these lands to national park tenure in recognition of their high conservation values and World Heritage status.

National park tenure does not generally allow access to horses and other non-native species. This is recognised in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Following submissions from recreational forest users, including horse riders, I am considering options for continued use of certain areas through appropriate tenure and management arrangements. For example, an area of 2,098 hectares within the Herberton Range Forest Reserve has remained as forest reserve to allow for further evaluation and discussion on horse riding issues before finalising tenure.

A decision on the tenure for this area will be made following my consideration of all issues and submissions.

Horse riding in north Queensland, like other areas of the State can continue to occur on gazetted roads that traverse protected areas, for example, Plath Road, which traverses the future Herberton Range National Park.

The Bicentennial National Trail also provides horse riding opportunities, and the interests of horse riders are maintained on this trail, with riding able to continue where the trail traverses national park under an authority issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. Discussions have recently occurred with the Bicentennial National Trail committee to include the “Bump Track” to ensure it is available to horse riders.