



Speech By
Hon. Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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**NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL (NO. 2)**

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (2.59 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to contribute to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013 introduced into this House by the Hon. Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing and member for Buderim on Tuesday, 20 August 2013. In simple terms, the objectives of this bill are to increase access to national parks and other public lands, achieve red-tape reduction and streamline legislative processes. As the minister said in his first reading speech—

This Bill will result in the most significant changes to the way that Queensland national parks and other protected areas are managed since the Nature Conservation Act was introduced in 1992.

In my role as the minister for tourism in our great state, I must commend Minister Dickson for his fine work in delivering these reforms and opening up Queensland's national parks for ecotourism opportunities and the enjoyment of locals and visitors alike. These reforms implement key actions identified by the tourism industry during the DestinationQ forums of 2012 and 2013. Nature and culture were key themes at both forums, and at the recent 2013 DestinationQ forum the tourism industry identified that in order to be competitive and successful over the next 20 years, we must preserve our natural assets. When referring to the act in his first reading speech the minister said—

It also fails to place enough emphasis on achieving recreational and commercial outcomes such as ecotourism in the management of protected areas.

This bill expands the objective of the Nature Conservation Act to include recreation and ecotourism opportunities in national parks and protected areas, all the while retaining the focus on conservation. After all, it is our wealth and variety of natural attributes and stunning landscapes that set us apart from many other destinations. They are an integral part of the Queensland experience; why would we wish to destroy them?

Queensland was a world leader in ecotourism. In fact, we may well have coined the phrase. But under almost 20 years of Labor, the lure of the green vote cost Queensland's ecotourism significantly. Pandering to extreme and minority views that would tie up our national parks and other magnificent natural treasures and lock people out of them while weeds and feral animals took control was akin to a death sentence for our ecotourism industry, not to mention the health of the very areas that Labor's overbearing legislation was supposed to protect. It is little wonder that their ecotourism plans lapsed years ago. They were too ashamed to have any because they had made it almost impossible for operators to gain permits or survive the suffocating red tape imposed by successive Labor governments. Labor do not like or understand small business; they never have and they never will.

Other countries benefit from well managed safaris and camping options such 'glamping' or glamour camping, even down to the terry towelling robe, so why shouldn't we? Being able to showcase our exquisite natural wonders and teach visitors to love and respect them as much as we

do is an holistic and sustainable approach that should be encouraged. But what will those opposite do? They will oppose this legislation, labelling it 'awful'. They want more of the same: lock it up or rent it out to your mates for peppercorn rates. The member for Rockhampton even made threats to government members about their reelection chances because of this bill.

As I have said many times in this House, neglect of this proud and diverse industry, which is made up of so many small businesses, saw the goose that laid the golden eggs laying bricks. Under the Newman government we will breathe new life into our tourism industry and our parks with careful and watchful management so that our unique authentic character and cultural heritage will be preserved and enhanced for many generations to come. The LNP went to the election with a policy to open national parks for the enjoyment of all Queenslanders and to deliver improved access for both tourists and the wider community. The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) will result in our national parks and other protected areas being managed more effectively with a focus on the protection and appreciation of all of the values these certain areas contain. As the minister mentioned previously—

Whilst the conservation of nature remains, this bill includes three new outcomes provided under the object of the act: firstly, the involvement of Indigenous people in the management of protected areas; secondly, the use and enjoyment of protected areas by the community; and thirdly, the social, culture and commercial uses of protected areas.

The opportunities for Indigenous involvement are unlimited, and I am excited about future prospects. To this end I will be working with Minister Elmes and my assistant minister King to progress discussions and identify appropriate projects. Mr Dickson has spoken already of the close consultation that he and his department will undertake with respective Indigenous landowners. Despite the scaremongering from members opposite, we are not opening up national parks for widespread development. This bill will allow responsible ecotourism operators to benefit from promoting our state's wonderful natural assets. It is in the interests of these operators to ensure that our national parks remain healthy and unspoiled. 'Take pictures, leave only footprints' is a great message to promote to visitors; in other words, leave the park or protected area in the same or better condition than you found it.

Let's have a look at the opposition's track record in regards to ecotourism. It took seven years to approve Skyrail with the helpful assistance of federal Labor. Skyrail is a globally recognised attraction that provides visitors with a unique prospective and great interpretation of our magnificent wet tropical rainforest. At Springbrook Labor kneecapped a superlative destination—again in a World Heritage area—by buying up most of the accommodation on the plateau, shutting them down and planting trees. Think back to the Daintree fiasco: tourism resorts were halted; properties were bought up; and local state and federal government planning was used to tie any tourism proposal into so much green tape that developers were sucked dry of capital before they had even turned the soil. If I were to list all cases of Labor suppressing the ecotourism industry in this state, I would be here until midnight. There was a prevailing attitude that the private sector knows nothing about protected area management and conservation, despite the fact that Queensland ecotourism operators have won awards the world over for conservation initiatives. It is also despite the fact that the same private sector experts who write the national park management plans also work for tourism developers to ensure that their projects are environmentally sustainable. It was despite the fact that Queensland operators led the way with the internationally renowned ecocertification program, which was the first in the world to gain accreditation from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and has comprehensive requirements to ensure excellent environmental practice.

In taking on World Heritage area management, governments commit to present World Heritage values. Yet far too often that responsibility was ignored by Labor or at most given lip service. Instead the tourism industry was shut out or shut down. According to the Auditor-General's 2010 report on the sustainable management of national parks and protected areas, the former government had management plans for only 17 per cent of protected areas, saying that it would take 30 years and \$60 million to complete them all. To streamline this process, this bill will make it a requirement that a management statement is developed for all protected areas, which is a much simpler planning document to prepare and in most cases is considered to adequately cover the relevant management issues.

At this point I would like to make it clear that this bill does not allow mining in national parks or protected areas. Mining areas which have been previously approved will be allowed to continue under approved conditions. In keeping with the Newman government's commitment to reduce red tape and regulation by 20 per cent by 2018, this bill will also drastically reduce a large number of tenure categories within the Nature Conservation Act. These categories create unnecessary confusion about how protected areas should be managed, and that is why this bill will halve the number of tenure categories from 14 to seven by merging five categories into two and abolishing four tenure categories.

The Newman government has set an ambitious goal to double overnight visitor expenditure from \$15 billion to \$30 billion by 2020. To achieve this goal we need to develop new tourism experiences that recognise it is often our unique natural assets that draw visitors to our great state in the first place. Research shows that our parks are highly sought after experiences by international and domestic tourists alike. In fact, Australia's world-class natural beauty is a top five consideration when it comes to selecting a holiday. Queensland is best positioned to benefit from this given our unparalleled ecotourism competitive advantage, boasting five areas that are recognised on the World Heritage register and three of the 15 nominated national landscapes in Australia. It gives me great pleasure to support this bill.