



Speech By  
**Hon. Jann Stuckey**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

---

Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2014

### **ENVIRONMENTAL OFFSETS BILL**

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (10.51 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Environmental Offsets Bill 2014. My focus is on the provision relating to governance reform of the National Trust and, consequently, the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, and specifically amendments to the National Trust Act 1963 and the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976. These governance reform amendments were initially proposed in a 2008 Labor government commissioned report known as the Webbe-Weller review. Recommendation 88 in that report supported a two-pronged recommendation made for governance reform. It stated—

The National Trust of Queensland should become a non-government organisation instead of a government statutory body acting as a community organisation.

Further, it stated—

The Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary should be divested to community form or enabled to operate in its own right by suitable form within the Environmental portfolio.

I might add that both of those recommendations, along with a number of others across the subject material, were supported by the former Labor government.

Amendments contained in this bill will enable the National Trust to become a company and, in doing so, will see the repeal of the National Trust Act and the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act. These changes will mean the National Trust will relinquish its statutory standing and become independent of government, as was suggested in the Weller report. Notably, these amendments do not propose that the National Trust divest responsibility for the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. The National Trust of Australia (Queensland) Ltd will continue as a charitable, not-for-profit organisation with a continued focus on its primary objective of the conservation, protection and appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage.

Since the introduction of this bill to parliament, I have met constituents and discussed the legislation with residents and local stakeholder groups who have, understandably, shared their concerns for the future of our much beloved community icon, the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. As honourable members would be aware, I have been a very strong advocate of the sanctuary for a quarter of a century now, and there is no way I would support legislation that I believed would harm in any way the future of the sanctuary or any fundamental move away from its current use. I appreciate the genuine concern of residents, particularly when they hear words such as 'repealing the act' or 'privatisation'. However, I wish to allay those fears and urge our community to play a more active role in the future prosperity of our sanctuary.

Jonathan Fisher, the CEO, explained the proposed changes well when he said what we will see is—

... the creation of an independent of government, not for profit, community focused, membership based organisation who have a say in protecting the properties owned by the National Trust, and not a private company focused on profits for distribution to shareholders.

On 27 March on Gold Coast ABC radio, he further said, '... we understand the word trust in our title is there to be earned and not to be abused.' That is very important and is a significant part of why I am supportive of these changes.

The draft constitution of the National Trust discusses the concept of becoming a governing member. I have been a member of the National Trust for several years now and will be looking at what is involved in applying to become a governing member, once those specific details are finalised. Governing members will be entitled to a vote and any motion to sell any property would require a majority—75 per cent as per the Corporations Act—in attendance. I encourage Currumbin residents with a keen interest in our sanctuary to apply to also become governing members so they can have a direct and meaningful say in its future.

As the local state member for Currumbin, I will continue to fight for the best interests of the sanctuary and ensure the actions of the National Trust continue in that vein, as they have done to date. For many years I have unsuccessfully lobbied Labor ministers for funding and I have continued to lobby this government. I am pleased to say we have had some success. Unlike then Labor minister Kate Jones, who never bothered to visit, and Anna Bligh, who only ever used Currumbin sanctuary for promotional photo shoots when it suited her, in March this year Minister Powell visited the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital to announce a \$100,000 grant to plant 15,000 fodder trees to feed our koalas. That money is proper recognition of the stellar efforts of the staff and volunteers at the hospital who are treating an increasing number of wildlife each year. I am confident that under this new structure we will continue to see the National Trust act in our sanctuary's best interests and support it long into the future as an education and conservation facility.