Mr KRAUSE (Beaudesert—LNP) (5.11 pm): This bill, as the member for Kallangur has just very well set out and the minister before him, is about bringing about some consistency between the Forestry Act and other acts of parliament and also, to a certain extent, reducing red tape and regulatory requirements under these acts of parliament. If there is one thing that in a broader sense people in the community dislike about government it is when there are inconsistencies between the way different acts deal with the same situation and also if there are inconsistencies in the way different departments of the same government deal with different situations. It creates some uncertainty. It increases the amount of time and cost that people have to expend in order to fulfil the purpose that they want to fulfil. So in this bill, by bringing about consistency between the Forestry Act, the Nature Conservation Act and also the Recreational Areas Management Act, we are reducing that uncertainty and reducing the potential costs to people who are utilising the provisions.

As the member for Kallangur stated, the majority of amendments do transfer provisions about the powers of forest and plantation officers from the Forestry Regulation to the Forestry Act. Again, I note that the committee did invite submissions on this bill from eight stakeholders who may have been interested in the provisions. We received two submissions—one from the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and also one from HQPlantations. They were both broadly supportive of the bill. It was good that they did make a submission about the issues in this bill that affect them.

Further amendments, apart from the ones transferring powers from the regulation into the act, standardise offences and penalties in the Forestry Act with more contemporary legislation, such as the Nature Conservation Act, to provide higher penalties for more serious offences and remove inconsistency in the way the same types of activities are managed across different classes of land, whether it be a state forest or a reserve or a national park. I think it is sensible to have that consistency across different areas of land. A third set of amendments simplify commercial activity permit requirements in the Forestry Act and the Recreational Areas Management Act. But I will deal with a couple of the provisions as they relate to the powers of officers in the Forestry Act.

Clause 4 of the bill replaces existing section 17 of the Forestry Act to clarify matters relating to the appointment of forest officers and to provide for officer identity cards. In particular, proposed sections 17C to 17E introduce new identity card requirements for forest and plantation officers, and these replace a certificate of appointment under the existing sections. So this is about modernising the provisions dealing with forest and plantation officers as well. As it says in the explanatory notes, identity cards are ‘far more practical for an officer to carry and use than a paper certificate’. So this is about moving with the times. The Forestry Act, as the minister said when he introduced the bill, is an old act, and we are going some way with this bill to bring it up to speed with the modern day.
These identity cards can be used by officers for a range of purposes. A ranger might be a forest officer under the Forestry Act or a conservation officer under the Nature Conservation Act and then also have powers under the Marine Parks Act. We are making things work and making things easier for those officers so that they do not get caught up in red tape or loopholes which restrict their ability to do their job.

This bill consolidates officer powers in the act. This is designed to ensure compliance with FLPs, fundamental legislative principles, of the parliament. Clause 6 of the bill amends section 18A of the Forestry Act as it deals with the powers to direct. New sections update the powers that forest and plantation officers can exercise in a state forest, timber research or plantation licence area. There is a variety of powers, and they include powers to direct people about the use of a vehicle or a vessel in order to prevent or remedy harm to forest products and waters to ensure the safety of people. Where it is reasonably suspected or found that people have committed an offence, they can be directed to leave an area and not to return for up to six days. So it is good that these specific powers are being placed into the act and taken out of the regulation.

Powers dealing with fire are also dealt with in the bill. Clause 7 omits section 18B of the Forestry Act which specifies the powers of plantation officers in relation to fire. It is replaced by another clause which enables an officer to direct a person to put out a fire or to reduce its intensity if the fire is not authorised or if the officer considers that it might become a hazard. Normally these powers need to be exercised by the officer warning the person whom they are directing that they should desist from their activity or to make changes to their activity. But there is always the overriding provision that can be exercised without such warning if it is necessary to ensure that nobody is endangered.

Other provisions also deal with managing pollution, waste, camping and grazing. Clause 31 inserts a new part 7A into the act to make provisions about managing pollution, waste, camping and grazing consistent with equivalent provisions in the Nature Conservation Act. Part 7A lists a whole range of activities that will be regulated. They include, for example, provisions about polluting a dam, a lake or a watercourse; taking water from a dam, a lake or a watercourse; or abandoning a vehicle in these sorts of areas.

I note that, while HQPlantations made a submission about this, it was considered that the powers that will be included in the act after this bill is passed are sufficient to deal with the removal of vehicles. I might also add that I think there is possible scope in a broader sense for regulations relating to the removal of vehicles that are abandoned to be streamlined. This relates to where the police and local government interact with each other to deal with that, and I think there is some scope more generally for that process to be streamlined. That does not relate strictly to the Forestry Act here, but I just note that in passing.

Part 7B also includes new sections 69K to 69S which deal with camping activities. Of interest is the fact that clause 12 provides that there can be e-permits and self-registration undertaken for people who are camping in areas of state parks and state reserves where they are permitted to camp. Again, this achieves consistency with equivalent camping areas in protected areas such as national parks.

Clause 14 of the bill amends section 25 of the Forestry Act to allow the chief executive to grant an occupation permit, a camping permit, a stock grazing permit and an apiary permit in a timber reserve. This brings consistency with the Nature Conservation Act. I note that the beekeeping industry is a very important industry for Queensland. In my electorate of Beaudesert, there are a number of people who are involved with and interested in the beekeeping industry. In fact, we had a reception here for them at Parliament House not that long ago.

Mr Choat: It was wonderful.

Mr KRAUSE: It was wonderful. I will take that interjection from the member for Ipswich West. Access to state land, whether it is national parks, state forest or other state land, is an important matter for people involved in the beekeeping industry. I have had dealings with the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines to ensure that our beekeepers continue to have that access to state land.

Commercial activity permits are also dealt with. As a sensible measure, proposed section 73B will increase the threshold for the undertaking of filming and photography. At the moment, it is permitted in these forestry lands only if there are three or fewer people involved. That is a pretty small crew. To make it a bit more practical, the amendments will permit filming or photography where it
involves 10 people or fewer and does not involve the building of permanent structures, using large generators or power sources or using vehicles, except for transport or camping. This is good for promoting our state as a place to film: it will bring business into our state. We have wonderful natural assets in our state and I tell you what, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Beaudesert electorate has some fairly wonderful natural assets in its environment. We should be promoting the use of our state lands across the length and breadth of Queensland for those types of commercial activities, always keeping in mind that we need to conserve areas that deserve conservation. Increasing the number of people who can be involved in filming from three to 10 is a sensible measure.

The bill reduces the red tape involved in extending a permit. At the moment, once permits for commercial activities come to an end, they need to be reapplied for in full and a full application fee needs to be paid. This bill introduces a measure for the renewal of a permit, and there is a methodology set out in the bill at clause 17. It states that a permit holder may apply to renew a permit before it expires and that the existing permit will continue for three months until a decision is made about that extension application. The chief executive or their delegate may put conditions on that permit, and they can change the conditions that were in the original permit if necessary. After people have been undertaking that commercial activity for a time, it may be that the conditions do need to change and it is sensible that that renewal process has been put in there. It is also sensible that there is flexibility for the department so that the people administering these regulations are able to change provisions if necessary. I note that the Recreation Areas Management Act contains similar provisions and there are similar amendments in this bill.

The recommendation of the committee was that the bill be passed. As I said at the beginning, this bill is about increasing consistency across all acts of this parliament that deal with these types of state land. It also reduces red tape and regulation in dealing with that. There is only one Queensland government, so when we have different acts of parliament doing different things it is confusing, it adds costs and it adds time. This bill reduces that and the bill should be supported.