




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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INNOVATION, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (3.01 pm), continuing: Within updates from the department, it has been reassuring to see that most of the seven recommendations from the audit are being implemented, including an overriding biodiversity strategy. The audit also identified that of the 107 environmental offsets obtained since the legislation's inception in 2014, only three of the 10 land based direct offsets have been implemented. Of most concern is that none of the 97 financial settlement offsets have been acquitted. The value of those offsets is \$9.64 million. It is acknowledged that our legislation needs to be stronger in this area to ensure that offsets do not result in a net loss of habitat and that fines for breaching conditions of the offset contract need to be implemented. As it stands, offsets are an ineffectual and costly bureaucratic process for developers, lawyers and the government.

Currently, compared to other states, Queensland has the lowest proportion of protected land at just 8.2 per cent, which is unlikely to meet the original 17 per cent target by 2020. If we are able to provide threatened species with the best chance of recovery, we need to protect their habitat. Buying back expired pastoral leases, protecting vulnerable parcels in the Great Barrier Reef and transferring state forests with high conservation value to national parks are options that warrant further consideration, as is being currently undertaken in Noosa with the expansion of the Tewantin National Park. The Community Sustainability Action grants of \$1.5 million that are available for initiatives that align with threatened species responses is a good start. However, it is vital that funding continues to be made available if there are to be solid ongoing outcomes. In closing, again I thank the Queensland Audit Office, my fellow committee members, the ministers, departments and agencies involved, and all who are committed to conserving our native flora and fauna.