




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2017

MOTION: REVOCATION OF PROTECTED AREAS

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (8.05 pm): I rise to address the revocation proposals that were tabled in the Queensland parliament by Hon. Steven Miles on 11 May 2017. The proposals under section 32 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 that request the Governor in Council to make a regulation revoking the dedication of areas within the Curtain Fig National Park, the Great Sandy National Park, the Jardine River National Park, the Millstream Falls National Park, the Wooroonooran National Park, the Eumundi Conservation Park, the Heathland Resources Reserve and the Jardine River Resources Reserve will not be opposed by the Liberal National Party.

The Liberal National Party takes the revocation of any national park area very seriously. We evaluate such proposals with due diligence. The Liberal National Party accepts the rationale as outlined by the Labor government with respect to the alignment of a number of road reserves within the specified areas as outlined in the notice of motion. With respect to a description of the areas to be revoked, in the interests of time I will not outline them, given they have been outlined appropriately in the notice of motion.

I thank the minister for the opportunity to be briefed by his department in relation to these matters prior to the debate today. Given the intent and resultant effect of some of the proposed revocations with respect to creating economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities, I make the following comments. In both a personal and professional capacity, having worked in Indigenous communities as a doctor and as a former president of both the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland and the Australian Medical Association of Queensland, as well as having been a deputy executive director of rural and remote medical services within Queensland Health's corporate office, I have seen firsthand how important creating opportunities for economic empowerment and self-determination can be for Indigenous communities.

In 2008, the Australian parliament and our nation came together for an historic moment in our history with a formal apology made to the stolen generations—those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were forcibly removed from their families and communities through the actions of previous governments. Many of those affected were children from Queensland. The formal apology that was offered in 2008 was a significant step in continuing the process of reconciliation and acknowledging the past injustices that had taken place over so many years.

The ongoing challenge that remains is the continuation and implementation of practical reconciliation strategies to close the gap and deliver comparable health, education, social and economic outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Queenslanders and Australians. We all need to work together to improve the socio-economic status of Indigenous Queenslanders and to increase Indigenous life expectancy. We also need to take further steps to provide equality in job opportunities to create economic enhancement within many of our regions across Queensland.

Fostering and creating the circumstances where access to a good education, a job and a decent home whilst still allowing for the retention of a strong cultural identity and a sense of belonging must be a priority of successive governments. It is unacceptable that, in the 21st century in our country—in fact,

a thriving country by world standards—we should tolerate or accept fundamental inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. As a state and nation we need to draw upon the strengths of our Indigenous cultures. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are amongst some of the oldest in history and we should acknowledge, celebrate, maintain and recognise them for their value. In part, these revocations will achieve those outcomes.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the work carried out in my electorate of Moggill by Aunty Jean Phillips, a local Indigenous representative, who works tirelessly for those in need suffering from economic, social and other disadvantage. I also pay tribute to Dr Denis Lennox, who is retiring from Queensland Health after 40 years of service. Dr Lennox has made an immense and lasting contribution to Indigenous health care, to rural and remote medicine, procedural birthing services and the broader public health policy framework both here in Queensland and across Australia. Dr Lennox's leadership and commitment with respect to the rural generalist pathway is a legacy that a generation of doctors and communities are eternally grateful for, given what the rural generalist pathway has delivered both individually and collectively. I wish Denis, his wife, Shirley, and their family all the best for a happy, fulfilled and well deserved retirement. I know all members of the Queensland parliament join with me in acknowledging and recognising the benefits of Queensland Health's rural generalist program to rural and remote communities across our state and the contribution that has been made by Dr Lennox to its success.

The LNP will not be opposing the revocation proposals given that they will align some roads within those outlying national parks areas and also some of the revocations will allow for economic empowerment in a number of Indigenous communities.