




Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 10 March 2011

NORTH QUEENSLAND, FISHING HUTS

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (7.05 pm): This morning I tabled a petition on behalf of 1,151 petitioners in my electorate of Hinchinbrook opposing the proposed removal of fishing huts from the Halifax Bay Wetlands National Park and the adjacent recreational reserve in the Palm, Cattle and Orient Creek areas of the Herbert River district. I am strongly opposed to the proposal by the Bligh Labor government to force the removal of these fishing huts inside and adjacent to the Halifax Bay Wetlands National Park.

Fishing huts are a special part of our lifestyle in North Queensland. There was absolutely no consultation with the local community prior to the Bligh Labor government announcing the new national park in 2008. This petition was organised to give the people of the Herbert River district an opportunity to have their say. The petition objects to the proposed declaration of the Halifax Bay Wetlands National Park because of our concerns it will mean the recreational activities pursued by my constituents in the area will be impacted upon.

Unfortunately, we have been proven to be right. Former environment minister, Andrew McNamara, stated in 2008 that huts on the recreational reserve adjacent to the national park would not be affected, but more recently this advice had changed. These hut owners have been double-crossed and have a right to be very angry indeed. I have been extremely disappointed with the bloody-mindedness of the Department of Environment and Resource Management in continuing to ignore the local community. All of the fishing hut owners, including those inside the Halifax Bay Wetlands National Park, should be left in peace by the Department of Environment and Resource Management to enjoy a basic recreational activity, camping and fishing, which has been part of our lifestyle in North Queensland for generations.

The Bligh Labor government's plans to declare this new national park need to be reconsidered. I believe there is an opportunity for a reasonable resolution to the issue if the minister and DERM are willing to give consideration to working with hut owners to accommodate them in a new national park management plan. As the Halifax Bay Wetlands National Park is yet to be gazetted, a management plan has not yet been developed. I propose that DERM work with hut owners in the area to develop a code of conduct for maintaining the huts inside the national park by providing permits to occupy to existing hut owners, which they have never previously had the opportunity to secure. Furthermore, existing hut owners are more than willing to pay reasonable annual rents in exchange for these permits to occupy. The annual rents from these permits to occupy could help to maintain the new national park.

No-one is saying that more fishing huts should be established inside or adjacent to the national park. The local community is prepared to draw a line in the sand as far as the establishment of any more fishing huts is concerned. All that is required is for the Bligh Labor government to demonstrate that it can be fair and reasonable in respect of this iconic recreational activity in North Queensland. I will continue to strongly advocate on behalf of my constituents in relation to this issue.