

Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women
The Honourable Desley Boyle

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Extra 9000 hectares protected and five new national parks for Toowoomba

The Queensland Government has converted almost 9000 hectares of forest reserve in the Toowoomba area to national parks and protected areas.

This includes the creation of five new national parks in the area as well as the extension of Bunya Mountains National Park, north-west of Toowoomba.

Environment Minister Desley Boyle said the transfers helped fulfil a State Government commitment made more than five years ago to convert nearly 407,000 hectares of forest in south-east Queensland to protected areas.

"In this second group of land transfers, eight forest reserves totalling 8813 hectares have been converted to national parks," she said.

"This means land with some of the highest conservation value and biodiversity in southern Queensland will be converted to national park or another form of protected area tenure.

"These transfers move us even closer to our long-term target of protecting five per cent of Queensland and represents part of the state's most significant expansion of national park to date."

Member for Toowoomba North Kerry Shine welcomed the announcement. He said the Bunya Mountains addition was particularly special.

"The Bunya Mountains National Park has increased in size from 12,140 hectares to 19,933 hectares with the addition of Cooyar Forest Reserve (7530 hectares) and Neumgna Forest Reserve (263 hectares)," Mr Shine said.

"The Bunya Mountains is one of the most iconic national parks in Queensland with its dome-shaped volcanic rocks, treeless grasslands and rainforest dominated by majestic bunya pines and hoop pine communities.

"The Bunya Mountains is also rich in wildlife including the Bunya Mountains ringtail possum, spotted tailed quoll and vulnerable species such as the sooty owl and peregrine falcon," he said.

Five new national parks have also been created:

- ◆ Esk National Park (377 hectares), just 12km south-west of the town
- ◆ Gatton National Park (426 hectares), about 30km east of Toowoomba

- ◆ Geham National Park (22 hectares), about 30km north-east of Toowoomba
- ◆ Hampton National Park (3.8 hectares), about 30km north-east of Toowoomba, and
- ◆ Pidna National Park (160 hectares), 6km south of Yarraman."

Ms Boyle said people should be in no doubt that the transfer of lands from State forest to protected areas would allow for the continuation of recreation uses such as, bushwalking and camping.

"Management of the new protected areas, including weed and feral animal control and fire management, will be carried out by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service," she said.

"Investment will also be made in fencing, firebreaks, signs, visitor infrastructure and access roads to all new areas."

The government has consulted widely as part of the transfer process, seeking input from traditional owners, local government, conservation groups, grazing lessees, recreation groups, peak bodies such as Agforce and the National Parks Association of Queensland, and State Government agencies including the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation, the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and Tourism Queensland.

The forest reserve land transfers are part of the South-East Queensland Forest Agreement (SEQFA), which covers the south-east Queensland bioregion (stretching from Gladstone to Brisbane). The first transfers, totalling more than 25,000 hectares, were completed earlier this year.