



Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc.

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Agriculture and Environment Committee
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Re Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Please accept our submission (below) on the *Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015*.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Moorhouse', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Margaret Moorhouse
Secretary/treasurer
Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc.

SUBMISSION

Members of ASH are pleased that this Bill effectively reinstates some of the important provisions that had been amended or abolished under the previous government. These include:

- Reinstating *the conservation of nature* as the sole object of the Nature Conservation Act.
- Reinstating *national park (scientific)* as a class of protected area.
- Reinstating the management principles of a *national park (scientific)*
- Reinstating *conservation parks* and *resources reserves* as separate classes of protected area and reinstating their management principles, by removing the classes “regional parks” and the “resource use areas” that were required to separate those areas that were previously *conservation parks* and *resources reserves*.
- Removing *special management area (scientific)* from the management principles of national parks.
- Removing the undemocratic provision that specified that no consultation would be required if the change was consistent with State government policy, with similar amendments to be made in the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006*.
- Removing an expired provision allowing grazing of livestock in national parks for emergency drought relief.
- Amending the *Land Act 1994* to stop existing grazing leases on protected areas from continuing as rolling term leases.

The government is to be applauded for recognising the proper purpose, role and management of national parks, as signified by reinstating *the conservation of nature* as the sole object of the Nature Conservation Act, and the other amendments listed above.

We note however that some other damaging amendments of the previous government have not been corrected or reinstated in this Bill.

1. A ***special management area (controlled action)*** provided for in the management principles of national parks in section 17 of the Nature Conservation Act should have been removed, in line with the election commitment of the present government to reinstate the cardinal principle for the management of national parks.
 - **ASH strongly recommends the removal of the *special management area (controlled action)***
 - **ASH strongly recommends the reinstatement of *national park (recovery)*, or the redesignation of all those areas as *conservation parks*.**
2. Some other classes of protected area that were abolished under the previous government have not been reinstated in this Bill. One of the “reasons” for having abolished special classes was that certain classes had not been used. There is no logical connection between a class having not been used, its purpose, and its appropriate use. These classes are necessary for the proper protection and management of areas having specific designations including

those listed under international agreements such as categories established by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

World-heritage-listed Hinchinbrook Island National Park (HINP) is a case in point: unlike national parks in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA), Hinchinbrook Island National Park, an island within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, has no dedicated world heritage management as does the WTWHA; it is entirely dependent on the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act. In recent years the HINP has become increasingly weedy, supporting sizeable populations of pigs and cane toads. Its resort was abandoned and non-compliant long before the owning company was wound up. Even its fire regime is causing increasing community alarm with anecdotal reports of loss of its once-famous blue banksia. Past Queensland governments have repeatedly refused to declare the HINP a **World Heritage Management Area (WHMA) Area**. Although the HINP's wilderness and world heritage values are promoted for tourism purposes, pressure to increase visitor numbers continues. No logic here, only politics and double messages. The ability to declare special areas to implement international agreements is vital for the proper protection and management of special places and the fulfilment of international obligations.

A refusal to reinstate these classes looks very much like an excuse for downgrading the management of the HINP (for instance) as a world heritage island national park having a substantial wilderness character. Its present management is failing its international expectations. It clearly needs to have the formal designations once provided in the Nature Conservation Act, which would allow for the required levels of protective management.

- **ASH strongly recommends the reinstatement of protected area classes as follows: Wilderness Area, World Heritage Management Area, International Agreement Area, and Coordinated Conservation Area.**

3. To allow resort development within a national park is to override the cardinal principle. Yet this Bill has not removed the 2013 provision for "ecotourism facility" (an amendment made by the previous government). This provision is a startling departure from past principled management of mainland national parks; tourist resorts having been located on private land outside the park. The experiment of resorts inside island national parks has been an outstanding failure all round. The shocking mess left to be overgrown on Hinchinbrook Island National Park, a double burden of ecological loss and future clean-up cost on the public purse, is a longstanding case showing clearly what poor outcomes have been accepted by the Queensland government for the sake of locating a resort inside a national park.

Instead of having so-called "ecotourism facilities", island national parks should be returned to development-free status. Hinchinbrook Island is an educational case, a combination of a predatory land developer and government inability to enforce compliance at any level, leaving the public good badly damaged and the public purse raided.

- **ASH strongly opposes the provision that allows tourist resort development inside national parks.** *End submission*