

30th November 2015

The Chair
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House, Brisbane Qld 4000.
aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: The Nature Conservation and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 (NCOLA)

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission on this Bill. I believe strongly in the importance of national parks and the protected estate as a way of conserving nature's precious ecological and bio-diverse assets. For many species protected areas are the last bastion for their defence, and unfortunately many species have disappeared before a defence could be mounted. I am a member of WPSQ, regularly support ACF and the Wilderness Society and am a long-time member of Gecko-Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Assoc. Inc. which is a not-for-profit environment association founded in 1989 and which has campaigned for more than 26 years to protect the environmental values and ecological sustainability of the Gold Coast, the state of Queensland and also at the national level.

This Bill corrects some of the dreadful problems created by the previous amendments to the Nature Conservation Act under the Newman Government. It helps to restore the community's faith in the Government's intention to protect the unique biodiversity of this state inside protected areas and outside. The window of opportunity to do this is pressured and narrowed constantly from all sides including the threat posed by Climate Change.

It is really pleasing to see that this Bill:-

1. Reinstates "the conservation of nature" as the sole object of the Act. One would think it should be self-evident, but clearly not to those who see personal and commercial profit in gaining access to these areas as the primary objective. I do hope this restoration of the conservation of nature as the sole object of the act will ensure that when proposals for development of and activities in protected areas that may be harmful to the integrity of these special places, the proposals are rejected.
2. Restores "national park (scientific)" as a protected area class - to ensure that the most threatened areas of biodiversity are protected, and to enable the furtherance of scientific studies that will benefit us all.
3. Restores to its proper place the management principles of "national park (scientific)", to help guide those tasked with managing our most important areas of biodiversity
4. Revives the concept of conservation parks and resources reserves as separate classes of protected area and reinstates their management principles. Appropriate identification and definition of a protected area, enables better management and indicates its importance and purpose to the wider community doing away with the confusion occasioned when regional park signified both a State conservation area as well as a Council regional park.

5. By removing a provision - that meant no consultation was required if there was an amendment to a management plan if the change was consistent with State government policy - has restored transparency and accountability to the process.
6. Takes away an expired provision that relates to allowing stock to graze on national parks for emergency drought relief. This farming activity is completely inappropriate and impacts negatively on ecosystems and the species dependent on them in national parks. One can sympathise with graziers and the poor cattle, however, it is incumbent on the graziers to be better managers of their business and not expect that areas set aside for the conservation of nature and the protection of valuable species can be made available as a stop gap measure to tide them over. The removal of this expired provision is long overdue.
7. Amends the *Land Act 1994* so that existing grazing leases on protected areas are no longer rolling term leases. This is another amendment I wholeheartedly support for the reasons given above. The protected estate is not there to provide fodder for livestock. I hope that the holders of such leases have been given ample warning that such leases are not an automatic right of the lessee.

I strongly support all the above amendments, but remain very concerned that other important amendments seem to have disappeared. e.g.

- The bill should be amended to remove the term “ecotourism facility” which was inserted into section 35(1)(a) of the Nature Conservation Act in 2013. Retention of this provision means that development of tourist resorts can occur inside national parks, thus overriding and conflicting with the cardinal principle. e.g.. inappropriate developments within national parks such as the skyway/cableway concept to Springbrook National Park, which was rightly rejected by previous state Labor Governments.
- The bill should also be amended to remove the term “service facility”, incorporated by the LNP into the Act in April 2013 to enable existing members of the then Government to exploit natural assets that belong to all the community for the purpose of private profit.
Given that we have so little of the native species and surface country of this state protected under national park and other conservation classifications, what little we have should be sacrosanct and remain free of commercial intervention and exploitation.
- Strict guidelines should be introduced regarding any developments that want to set up adjacent to national parks and conservation areas to ensure that their values are not eroded.
- Similarly the other special management area provided for in the management principles of national parks -Section 17 – (Special management area (controlled action) - should be removed in order to strengthen the restoration of the cardinal principle for management of national parks. Perhaps this could be achieved by reinstating national park recovery status for areas of high biodiversity or by designating all of these areas as conservation parks.
- I would also urge the Government to reinstate the other classes of protected areas such as Wilderness Area, World Heritage Management Area, International Agreement Area, and Coordinated Conservation Area as they all assist in protecting areas in line with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories.
- I also fully support the amendment of the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* (ALA) to:

- establish a process to make regional parks on Cape York Peninsula transferable;
and
- streamline the process to convert regional parks to jointly managed national park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land (CYPAL)).

Thank you for your consideration of my deeply felt submission.

Yours sincerely

J Bridle (Johanna Bridle - [REDACTED])