

PO Box 1040
Milton, QLD 4064

9th July 2017



Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Nature Conservation (Special Wildlife Reserves) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017

Protect the Bush Alliance (PTBA) is an alliance of 30 NGOs and community groups in Queensland and Australia representing over 30,000 people. Our goal is to implement ways of preventing the continuing loss of areas of high conservation values to inappropriate development.

With this aim in mind, we acknowledge the department's efforts to substantially increase the protected areas estate. Accepting the contribution made by private conservancies and land holders will in the immediate future best contribute to expanding the estate. The addition of 'Special Wildlife Reserves' is to be commended and we fully support this mechanism to truly safeguard country, in perpetuity.

The current standing of Nature Refuges has been of considerable concern to this Alliance. We have actively advocated for the Bimblebox Nature Refuge, however, with 499 nature refuges providing sanctuary over 3.8million hectares of the state, we would urge the department to continue to explore ways to extract these reserves from the threat of resource extraction.

We are encouraged that several land holders have already expressed interest in entering into a special wildlife reserve during the consultation process. Although the process is to be entirely voluntary; ideally where significant bio-diversity exists (i.e artesian springs) we would hope approaches may be made with sufficient incentives and support offered, to encourage land holders to volunteer their participation. To truly protect the State's biodiversity, niche habitats providing for iconic threatened species, must be given priority when selecting areas for protection.

We do not agree that a Conservation Park or Resources Reserve in public ownership should be exposed to any broader range of uses, including resource extraction. This moderate-level protection fails to offer security from the inevitable fragmentation and disturbance by such activities. In considering protections and impacts with regard to timber interests in areas identified as having outstanding conservation values, it remains a point of concern that habitat protection is not prioritised over other competing interests.

In reference to 'What restrictions would apply to exploration, prospecting and resource extraction'. Upon declaration of a SWR, prohibition of other activities applies subject to some exclusions which are detailed in section 27 of the Nature Conservation Act in relation to some petroleum and gas activities, such as pipeline licenses.

This is too broad; **some petroleum and gas activities**. Surely at this juncture it is imperative that absolutely no resource extraction activities occur in Special Wildlife Reserves, given the Minister of natural resources has previously agreed the area be relinquished for conservation.

If Special Wildlife Reserves are to make a significant contribution to saving threatened species, then they must be for that reason and that reason alone. For example, pipelines demand continuous land clearing creating disturbing edge effects over hundreds of kilometres. Pipelines should be deviated around reserves. These costs are being attributed to our landscapes instead of being fairly and appropriately, a cost apportioned to industry.

We know with climate change causing more severe droughts and storm events that many species are in decline. Queensland's dismal record of vegetation management together with habitat destruction, much of it for the resource industry, continues to fragment country, alter water tables and adversely impact wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

Where we greatly welcome the initiative to establish Special Wildlife Reserves, it remains immensely disappointing these areas are obviously not to be for the protection of threatened systems with the true exclusion of all else. The resource industry already has a disproportionate 'right' to over 80% of Queensland. This "right" is untenable and inequitable.

It was assumed the intention of this new legislation was, at least in part, to prevent more examples of Nature Refuges (Bimblebox Nature Refuge (Alpha) Strathtay Nature Refuge (Hughendon) and Mt Pleasant (Collinsville SDA)) being threatened by mining activities. It is regrettable if in fact it fails in this purpose.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Nature Conservation (Special Wildlife Reserves) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017.

Yours sincerely



Sheena Gillman
Project Coordinator PTBA
Tel: 07 3201 1982
Mb: [REDACTED]