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Agriculture and Environmental Committee
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10 June 2017

**National Parks Association of Queensland
Submission to**

Agriculture and Environmental Committee:

Nature Conservation (Special Wildlife Reserve) Amendment Bill 2017

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Nature Conservation (Special Wildlife Reserve) Amendment Bill 2017* (the Bill).

The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) is dedicated to promoting the preservation, expansion, good management and presentation of national parks in Queensland.

Established in 1930, NPAQ is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation. The association has played a pivotal role in the establishment of many national parks in Queensland. NPAQ's purpose is achieved through advocating for the protection, expansion and good management of the protected area estate in Queensland; fostering the appreciation and enjoyment of nature through a bushwalking and outdoor activities program; undertaking on-ground conservation and monitoring work; educating the community about national parks and their benefits; and supporting the development and application of scientific and professional knowledge in advancing national parks and nature conservation.

Submission

NPAQ welcomes and supports proposed protected area legislation as a positive action toward addressing the many challenges facing the sustainable future of a robust and thriving protected area estate in Queensland.

The expansion and management of the protected area estate in Queensland has always been an important component of state conservation and environmental protection policy. While national parks are the mainstay of nature conservation, NPAQ recognises private and Indigenous protected areas are playing an increasing role.

NPAQ regards the Bill as a leading piece of legislation and a genuine effort to counter the challenges involved in growing and managing the protected area estate in Queensland.

There are, however, a few outstanding issues that are of significant concern to NPAQ.

Funding for National Parks and 'Special Wildlife Reserves'

The national park estate has not yet reached the goal of comprehensive representation and should remain at the centre of protected area growth in Queensland. While NPAQ acknowledges the role private protected areas play in conservation, any government investment in privately-owned protected areas must not come at the expense of suitable funding for the expansion and appropriate management of public protected areas. As such, any financial incentives for Special Wildlife Reserves (SWR) to be provided by the State (i.e. under Section 43C(2)(a)) should be budgeted and transparently tracked separately to funding provided for the national park estate.

Management Programs Should Available to the Public

The Bill currently includes no provision for management programs SWR to be reviewed or accessed by the public. Public scrutiny is necessary to ensure the areas meet their obligations under the legislation and provides a mechanism to minimise rorts. Where government funding is provided, provision should be made for public access to the management programs. Sections 120EA- EF of the Bill should be amended to require management programs for SWRs that receive government incentives to be made available to the public.

Competing Interests

The EHP Agriculture and Environmental Committee briefing dated 4 July 2018 states "no two (natural) areas as having identical suite or extent of characteristics". Once natural areas are lost, they cannot be replaced. Whereas mining, timber and grazing resources are more inter-changeable. As such, conservation must be prioritised in areas where Queensland has yet to secure a comprehensive, adequate and representation of a bioregion, and more specifically, a regional ecosystem; the alternative is that these areas will be lost before we can protect them for future generations. The Bill needs to include a mechanism to allow competing resource interest to only be granted renewals or extensions when they can prove there is existing regional ecosystem and threatened habitat representation within the wider protected area estate.

Grazing

NPAQ considers all grazing, not just commercial grazing, should be excluded from national parks and SWRs given its detrimental impact on ecosystems including trampling of habitat, compacting of soils and spreading of weeds. As such, Section 21(1)(d) should be amended to ensure both commercial and non-commercial grazing is excluded from SWRs and National Parks.

Ecotourism

NPAQ considers commercial ecotourism infrastructure in high level protected areas such as National Parks, and now SWRs, to undermine the natural heritage values to be protected for future generations. This infrastructure should be located adjacent to the high level protected area or in a lower level protection area.

New Service facilities

New petroleum pipeline licences should not be permitted in National Parks and SWRs as they fragment habitat and can introduce weeds. As such, Sections 27(2) and 43(G)(5) should be removed.

Thank you for considering NPAQ's submission.

Yours sincerely



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