

Mr Ian Rickuss MP
Chair
Agriculture, Resources, and Environment Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane 4000

Email address – arec@parliament.qld.gov.au

27th October 2013

Dear Mr Rickuss

RE: Submission to the Inquiry on North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Another Act Amendment Bill 2013

I have been directed by the State Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to forward a submission for consideration by your committee on the above legislation.

Wildlife Queensland is one of the most respected wildlife-focused conservation groups in Queensland. With over 5500 supporters spread across numerous branches throughout Queensland, Wildlife Queensland is a strong voice for our wildlife and its habitat.

Wildlife Queensland is apolitical. Our aims include;

- **Preserve** the flora and fauna of Australia by all lawful means
- **Educate** the community in an understanding of the principles of conservation and preservation of the natural environment
- **Discourage** by all legal means, the possible destruction, exploitation and unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment.
- **Encourage** rational land use and proper land planning of existing and future development, and the use of the natural environment and its management.

Wildlife Queensland welcomes the opportunity to make comment. Wildlife Queensland will comment on those sections of the Bill of particular concern to Wildlife Queensland. Opposition to some sections may be indicated without providing detailed comment as it is the view of Wildlife Queensland that there are other organisations far more component to comment in detail. Furthermore if Wildlife Queensland elects not to comment on a topic or aspect, this should not be construed necessarily as support for the view presented.

Wildlife Queensland appreciates the necessity to review legislation periodically with a view to clarifying or strengthening legislation. However on this occasion, proposed action by the Government is weakening relevant legislation that will give effect to environmental harm and shatter the rightful aspirations and goals of Traditional owners and Indigenous peoples. Wildlife Queensland is totally opposed to the Bill.

The explanatory notes outline the objectives of the Bill. In broad terms the objectives appear to be:

- Enable Sibelco Australia Limited to seek renewal of leases in 2019
- Provide a realistic timeframe for an economic transition from mining
- Remove the restricted mine path that minimises environmental harm and address sovereign risk
- Present an opportunity to extend mining until 2035
- Further reduce environmental safeguards by removing requirements to demonstrate how the applicant will minimise and mitigate effects of proposed vegetation clearing

Minister Cripps indicated in his speech on 17th October to Parliament sandmining has been operational since 1949. Minister Cripps then proceeded to outline the alleged flaws in the legislation introduced by the Bligh Government in 2011 the intention of which was to provide a framework to transition the economy away from sand mining and put a deadline on this unsustainable operation. Unlike the current Bill under consideration, the Bligh legislation mirrored a sound public policy process involving transparency and extensive and timely consultation with all key stakeholders not only those with a financial benefit. The current Bill has failed to provide transparency and no consultation has occurred with a broad range of interested parties. Where is the science or the business case and legal advices underpinning this Bill or is it simply as suggested by the Minister in his speech just another pre-election commitment.

Major concerns for Wildlife Queensland include:

- On going threat to the biodiversity of North Stradbroke Island, potential harm of areas of high environmental significance to area and potential loss to future national parks
- Impacts on Traditional owners the Quandamooka peoples

Wildlife Queensland has no rights to speak on the behalf of the Quandamooka peoples and it would be totally inappropriate to do so. However Wildlife Queensland strongly supports these people in their quest to continue to manage and care for their lands, a custom and practice that has proceeded over time for thousands of years. This Bill if enacted undoubtedly will diminish the current optimism that arose from 2011 decisions. The Government may be satisfied that the Bill does not breach the Native Title Act but the basis of such a statement is not provided. Surely if the Government is so confident, why was it that extensive consultation did not occur with the Quandamooka peoples and their aspirations and goals not only listened to but acted upon.

Wildlife Queensland strongly objects to yet another attack on the environment and biodiversity of the State. North Stradbroke Island is home to distinctive ecosystems and landforms. The extension of mining beyond 2019 as well as areas subject to mining increased will cause environmental harm. Rehabilitation of sites is simply not the answer. Undoubtedly the composition of plant species and even the vegetal structure may be put in place but there is no guarantee that the fauna components and ecological processes are re-established. Revegetation can readily occur but restoration of an ecosystem is a different matter. Mining will continue to fragment much disturbed vegetation in places. It appears mining will be allowed in 'of concern regional ecosystems' previously not permitted. Wildlife Queensland is also very concerned that inadequate consideration has been given to hydrological processes. The restricted mine path was not simply

plucked out of mid air but selected to minimise environmental harm not only on site but in areas adjacent to leases.

The removal of environmental safeguards is another concern. With reliance on enforcement by another Department what guarantees are there that a rigorous compliance program will be in place to enforce regulations. A brief review of history shows that Governments of all political persuasions have experienced difficulties in enforcing regulations and the environment ends up losing out. With a declining biodiversity diminishing greentape regulations and allowing for weakened environmental controls are not prudent choices.

Finally the need to allow an extension of over 20 years to mining in order to effect an economic transition from mining is not substantiated by hard fact. Wildlife Queensland would be most interested to learn what other alternatives were even considered.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Des Boyland', followed by a large, stylized capital letter 'D'.

Des Boyland, Policies and Campaigns Manager