

**COMMENTS ON THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012**

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Two areas of this Bill are of grave concern for biodiversity protection and management in this State. They are the provision of leases for ecotourism facilities in National Parks and the removal of permitting provisions in the Forestry Act.

*The primary purpose of national parks is the conservation of nature. This is clearly and unambiguously set out in section 17 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 as the cardinal principle to be observed in the management of National Parks. This has international recognition (IUCN compliant) and has operated successfully for more than 50 years. It is incorporated in the five management provisions for a service facility in the new Bill but **not** in the management provisions for an ecotourism facility. Clearly the government is aware that ecotourism facilities will breach the Cardinal Principle of National Park management.*

The management of National Parks has not locked up these areas and the provisions of this Bill will do nothing to enhance public visitation to National Parks. Indeed Ecotourism leases will confuse public access to public land with the exclusive use associated with private ecotourism facilities. The Nature Conservation Act 1992 provides for a range of protected areas involving different levels of resource protection which caters for appropriate recreational uses. It is the most practical approach to natural resource protection on public land. Improving the promotion of National Parks, clearly linking visitation with off Park facilities, better transport to and from protected areas, and enhancing the National Park experience are more effective ways of improving tourism in National Parks.

Any tourism facility meeting the provisions of this Bill would have to be low impact, and therefore low occupancy, exclusive, and expensive to be financially viable. The opportunity to have a low startup cost with a smoothed regulatory procedure is no doubt attractive to tourist businesses and while this may have financial benefits for the government it will be at the cost of giving away public protected land. This is not acceptable.

Sub # 17

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14 DEC 2012
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY
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Finally, changes to the Forestry Act are not accompanied by any scientific assessment which establishes the conservation values of these forests. Any action which contributes to the loss and degradation of State Forests contributes to the loss of biodiversity in Queensland.

Please reconsider the impact that these amendments will have on the National Park status of this State and its future biodiversity.

Yours faithfully,

*Suzanne Smith, President , Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld. Tully
12th December 2012*