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PO Box 275 Caloundra Qld 4551
Phone/Fax: 0754 442 707
sunshine@wildlife.org.au

Sub# 26



17 December 2012

Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Email: hcsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012

We are opposed to any privately operated ecotourism facilities in National Parks. The current framework in the Nature Conservation Act 1992, which does not allow for privately funded and operated ecotourism infrastructure on national park tenures should remain in place.

National Parks were created for the preservation and conservation of native flora and fauna, and to act as refugia for native wildlife. In other words, the conservation of nature.

Currently, less than 5% of Queensland is preserved in National Park, which is an appalling statistic, reflecting adversely on the Queensland Government, considering that virtually all other states are progressing the expansion of natural areas, in order to preserve as much as possible of Australia's unique biological diversity.

The Government should be committed to expanding the National Park estate, and encouraging appropriate tourism and public recreation, by promoting National Park visitation by the public, which appeared to be the intention of "opening up national parks to the public", not locking areas formerly accessible to the general public away in private ownership, therefore making them inaccessible to the general public, nor giving exclusive rights to tourism operators.

Promotion of National Parks could be achieved through providing details of location, access, facilities, terrain, types of walk etc, such as is available now through print media or websites. Enhanced experiences for visitors, for example, might be provided by guided interpretive walks by local rangers, as is already the case in Carnarvon National Park.

There are many opportunities for tourism facilities in close proximity to national parks to promote the parks to their clientele.

We maintain that any tourism facility in a national park will result in a 'significant change' to the land's natural condition, by the very fact of the construction of the facility, and the ongoing impact of its services on the surrounding area.

We cannot see that the construction and use of an ecotourism facility in a national park will be in the public interest, given that the park is already a public recreation area. The public interest should lie in the conservation of the natural estate.

Neither do we see that private ecotourism ventures in national parks are likely to be commercially viable propositions, nor return economic benefits to the government.

Amendment to the Forestry Act 1959

The 7 year and 10 hectare limits on occupation permits under the Forestry Act should continue.

State forests are, in many cases, critical centres of biodiversity, to the extent that under the Regional Forests Agreement many forests were transferred to national park status, to protect such diversity.

Any extension of time for a lease (7 years), and area, (10 hectares), will have a detrimental affect on this biodiversity. Many forests are already compromised by CSG leases.

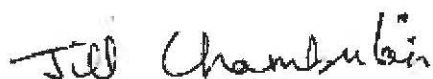
We understand in this regard, that there are currently around 345 existing coal seam gas well sites and 250 kilometres of gas and water pipelines installed in 21 state forests, with proposals for a further 180 wells and 100 kilometres of pipeline being assessed to transverse state forests,

As mentioned above, state forests are conservators of biodiversity, and should not be further compromised by CSG or water infrastructure development..

We maintain therefore that there should be no amendment to the Nature Conservation Act 1992 to enable authorisation of privately operated ecotourism facilities in national park, national park (recovery), including indigenous joint management areas, and in national park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land)

Please do not hesitate to contact the writer if further clarification is needed.

Yours faithfully,



Jill Chamberlain OAM
President