

The Hon. Steven Dickson MP
Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing
Level 7, 111 George St
PO Box 15187
City East Qld 4002



ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Sub # 36

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HEALTH AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES COMMITTEE

18 December 2012

Dear Minister Dickson

Re: Queensland Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012

We write as recently appointed Chairs of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Technical and Scientific Committee (TSAC) for the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area.

The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area includes iconic Queensland National Parks such as Lamington, Springbrook, Mount Barney and the Main Range. This World Heritage Area, along with the Wet Tropics, Great Barrier Reef and Riversleigh fossil site has been added to the World Heritage List in recognition of its exceptional natural values and diversity of plants and animals.

As part of our role as advisory bodies, we are committed to the protection, conservation and presentation of the World Heritage Area. We are especially supportive of initiatives that will raise public awareness understanding and appreciation of this remarkable natural heritage including the spectacular scenery, the fascinating diversity of rainforest communities and the many plants and animals within.

Community concerns have been raised in relation to the proposed amendments to the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992. These include a perceived reduction in the legislative protection of World Heritage values.

It is understood through the reading of your introduction to parliament of these documents that "a comprehensive policy framework and associated procedures will be developed to support the implementation of these provisions" and further that the "policy framework will also include the development of a robust and transparent process to assess any proposed ecotourism developments".

We commend this approach and recommend that this must be included in the legislation itself rather than as policy documents.

Concerns remain that the intent of the amendments, to facilitate ecotourism developments within the World Heritage Area, may result in increased pressures on the natural values for which the property is listed. To address these concerns, we recommend that the following measures be detailed in the Amendment Bill:

- A. The Bill (and any subsequent Act) detail the environmental impact assessment procedures that will ensure the Chief Executive can be satisfied that "a service facility or ecotourism facility" is:
- i. in the public interest,
 - ii. ecologically sustainable, and
 - iii. the cardinal principle for the management of national parks is observed (i.e. *to provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition and the protection of the area's cultural resources and values*).
- B. The Bill (and any subsequent Act) details that Environmental Impact Assessments for any such service facility or ecotourism facility include:
- i. a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts on outstanding universal value as required under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act;
 - ii. an assessment of potential cumulative impacts on outstanding universal value, and
 - iii. procedures for community consultation.
- C. The Bill include that the assessment for ecotourism facilities be the same as for service facilities and include a determination that "there is no reasonably practicable alternative to the use (i.e. add subclause (1)(b)(v) to subclause (1)(c)).


If you or your staff have any queries in relation to the matter we can be contacted through the Gondwana Rainforests Executive Officer, Tricia Waters, on 02 6650 7101.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this submission to support the management of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mahri Koch
Chair, Gondwana Rainforests
Community Advisory Committee



Professor Nick Reid
Chair, Gondwana Rainforests Technical and
Scientific Advisory Committee

cc. Minister Andrew Powell, Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection