



Health and Community Services Committee

Nature Conservation and other Legislation Amendment Bill

Submission by Dr Jan Aldenhoven, [REDACTED] Point Lookout QLD 4183
[REDACTED]

I make this submission from the experience of being a wildlife filmmaker, qualified biologist and someone who enjoys the recreation and inspirational opportunities afforded by national parks.

1. Policy objective: "amend the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NC Act) to enable authorisation of privately operated eco-tourism facilities in national park, national park (recovery), including indigenous joint management areas, and in national park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land)."

Comments:

I do not support the granting of long-term licenses to private enterprise to build tourist facilities and accommodation inside national parks.

In my industry, wildlife filmmaking, the most successful genres are films that depict amazing plants and animals living in pristine habitats. Worldwide these films translate across all countries and cultures. Such films rely on preservation of biodiversity and wild habitats. That people love to watch such films also reflects what people expect to see when they visit a national park - a wild place in its natural state with an abundance and richness of life. They don't want to see an environment compromised by tourist developments.

National Parks are for nature first and foremost. That is the essence of the cardinal principle that underpins the management of our national parks. The Bill should seek to uphold and preserve the cardinal principle not erode it.

Less than 5% of Queensland is under national park tenure, which is all the more reason to keep this small percentage of land for nature. There is ample land outside of the national park estate for private development.

Allowing private ecotourism facilities in national parks is not consistent with the cardinal principle and such a policy works against businesses and communities that exist outside national parks.

Speaking from personal experience, our small company has worked all over Australia in and around national parks. Our work relies on filming wildlife in the un-spoiled, natural landscapes that national parks provide. Usually we live in accommodation outside the national park (unless we camp in the park). This works well. It's comfortable, practical and we benefit from the accumulated knowledge of the area that resides within the communities that live around a national park. It's important such communities remain viable and are nurtured. Allowing one or two private companies to set up eco-lodges within a national park has the potential to compete directly with small businesses that exist outside the park- businesses that help keep

communities alive. Some farms near national parks have remained viable because they have diversified into ventures that support tourism such as accommodation, food production and tour guiding. It would seem more economical and better for the community as a whole to encourage and facilitate private tourist ventures off park.

Developing tourist accommodation and infrastructure off park allows the people of Queensland to benefit from the revenue that comes from tourism without compromising national assets of biodiversity, pristine habitats and the ecosystem services such assets provide.

It would appear much could be done to improve existing walking trails, visitor centres and interpretation in national parks that would attract more tourists to spend longer periods exploring our parks. Increasing length of stay means increasing demand for accommodation and this can be provided by facilities outside the park.

The explanatory notes for the Bill have not provided references or data that support claims that private eco-tourism accommodation within national parks will increase tourist revenue overall, nor has data been examined to evaluate the alternative strategy of encouraging private tourist development outside national parks. No data or analysis is summarised concerning negative impacts of private developments inside parks on businesses and communities outside national parks.

2. Policy Objective: To amend the Forestry Act 1959 (Forestry Act) to improve permit administration by removing the 7 year maximum term and 10 hectare maximum area limits on the grant of a permit to occupy (occupation permit).

Comment: The amendment has the potential to fragment habitat and reduce biodiversity. It could lead to open ended permits to occupy with loss of control on crown land. These negative impacts would not be in the wider public interest.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.
I am happy to provide further information if required.

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