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SERVICES COMMITTEE

**From:** Ronda Green [Redacted]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 19 December 2012 8:59 AM  
**To:** Health and Community Services Committee  
**Subject:** Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Bill 2012

## Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Bill 2012

Submission from Wildlife Tourism Australia Inc., 18 December 2012

(a copy of this has also been sent separately to Chairman Peter Dowling)

As representatives of a national tourism organisation, we are very mindful of the nuisance value of much of the bureaucracy that is forced upon us and our members. I have in fact lectured on this myself at university level, and not only the students but also the coordinator of the course have been surprised at the extent of bureaucratic hoops small operators have to jump through. WTA's national workshop in May 2012 also devoted several hours to discussion on this issue.

However, we also recognise that some regulations serve very important purposes, especially regarding public safety and the conservation of our biodiversity

The amendments to the bill concern us in the following ways:

- "Ecotourism" is not clearly defined here. The true definition is not synonymous with adventure tourism or even nature tourism, despite the way it is commonly used in some quarters. Ecotourism Australia defines it as "ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation".
- To be truly ecologically sustainable, there must be adequate information, and understanding of this information, of the fauna and flora and ecological processes involved in any area where activities or construction are to take place, and an adequate monitoring system set up. We have heard no assurances that this is being considered, and certainly no details of how extensive such studies might be. It is certainly not acceptable to simply introduce activities or constructions and hope it will be sustainable, or even to expect that it will become obvious if not so. Many of the species our pairs are designed to protect are not readily observed, and could well disappear before ever detected if suitable research is not conducted prior to the new additions.
- We have not heard any details of the kinds of accommodate envisaged in national parks. Simple hikers' huts for extended walks? Exclusive lodges? ...? Whilst we might agree with the resurrection of some pre-existing accommodation in large national parks (e.g. the shearers' quarters in Currawinya National Park) if conducted in an environmentally sustainable way, we would have many concerns with other constructions within national parks. Each case would have to be very carefully considered from many angles, primarily impact on fauna and flora, and also whether it would increase visitor impact, restrict access to some sectors, or

detract from the scenery (an example adjacent to a national park would be the walk to Python Rock, Lamington National Park, where the roofs of new villas are visible instead of the former unbroken treetops)

- It sounds strange that the government keeps talking about opening up our national parks and providing access, when we all have access already, as long as we go on foot rather than horseback or 4WD cross-country (we already of course have access by 4WD along existing roads). There is plenty of evidence in the literature to show that such activities can cause substantial damage to ecosystems and individual species. There may well be some areas in large national parks where access could be granted to complete an otherwise obstructed long-distance trails, but again this would have to be considered on a case by case basis, including prior research and adequate monitoring as above.
- Bureaucracy and the cost of public liability insurance for landowners who allow access (but are themselves not tour operators or accommodation providers) also restricts activities such as horse-riding and cross-country driving on private and leasehold lands, and we would urge the government to look into this very thoroughly as an alternative to opening up national parks for such purposes

We would very much appreciate a response to each of these concerns

Yours sincerely

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