

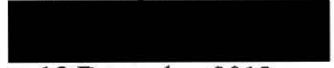
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IH & C Herbert

Belgamba



Rockhampton 4700



19 December 2012



Sub # 65



The Chair,
Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission re: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012

Since coming to power the Newman government has embarked on a program of 'opening up' National Parks to various activities. The *Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012* provides for the development of private tourism facilities within National Parks. We do not agree with these amendments to the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* for the following reasons –

1. Increasing tourism to Queensland

We do not accept that placing permanent private eco-tourism resorts inside National Parks will increase the numbers of tourists coming to Queensland. Where is the economic analysis to demonstrate that resorts inside National Parks will bring in more tourists than resort accommodation on adjacent private land? A more likely way of increasing tourism numbers is to ensure that park facilities such as walking tracks and interpretive centres are well maintained. Spending by tourists directly associated with visiting National Parks already contributes hundreds of millions of dollars per annum to the Queensland economy. Allowing a few resorts within National Parks is not going to make much difference to the total tourism dollar. Therefore this Bill cannot be justified on the basis of its contribution to the tourism pillar of the 'four pillar economy'

2. Profitability of ecotourism

We dispute the assumption that significant profits can be made from ecotourism. Lamington and Carnarvon Gorge are two very well-known National Parks in Queensland. Binna Burra Lodge and Carnarvon Wilderness Lodge are located in prime positions on the edge of these National Parks. They are both highly accredited eco-resorts of international standing. In spite of this they struggle to make a profit and operate on the basis that shareholders receive no dividend and only maintain their ownership for the 'love of it'. We are shareholders of both companies. The only way to increase profitability in this industry is to increase visitor numbers to levels that would threaten the core values of National Parks, as happened in Yosemite NP in USA decades ago. The fact that these resorts are on private land on the edge of the National Park and not on National Park land, is of no consequence.

3. Cardinal Principle of National Parks

Section 35 (1) (c) (iii) of the Bill contains the words: "the use will provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the preservation of the land's natural condition and the protection of the land's cultural resources and values;". This is effectively the Cardinal Principle. However, if the Cardinal Principle were to be properly applied, private development would not be allowed. We are not comforted by the use of the Cardinal Principle as a tool to enable the building of eco-tourism resorts on National Parks land.

Conclusion

There is more to National Parks than dollar making machines. The vast majority of Queenslanders recognise that National Parks are very special places which deserve the highest level of protection. There is ample scope for the development of appropriate eco-tourism facilities on the edges of National Parks, if there is sufficient demand.

Yours faithfully,



Ian and Cathy Herbert