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To: Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament of Queensland
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Nature Conservation and other Legislation Amendment Bill (No.2) 2013

I wish to make a submission objecting to this Bill, introduced to the Parliament by Hon. S.L.Dickson, Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, on 20th August 2013.

Until now, the definition and the management of National Parks in Queensland has been covered by the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

The new Bill, referred to above, will totally change the **intent** of the 1992 Act. It will no longer have nature conservation as its objective. So why persist with such a misleading title?

The new philosophy underpinning the bill would be more accurately expressed by such a title as the "Nature Exploitation Act", since the new purpose of the Government seems to be to make money out of National Parks, with tourism entrepreneurs, developers and graziers, as well as the government, as the main beneficiaries.

I wish to object to the whole of this proposed Act, on the following grounds:

- With a few simple words, it seeks to overthrow the universally accepted definition of a National Park. National Parks, all over the world, have been set up, usually after many years of struggle by conservationists, for **one principal purpose: the preservation of pockets of land from human exploitation.**
- Exploitation always implies degradation of the original primitive nature of the land by roads, structures and vehicles. It is this **original primitive nature of the land** that lies at the heart of the concept of a National Park.
- Unless this original primitive nature is preserved, a National Park loses its value as
 - a "biodiversity bank"
 - a place for quiet non-exploitative recreation, such as bush-walking, bird-watching, contemplation away from noise and stress.
- Queensland's National Parks estate, at less than 5% of the state, is already paltry by international standards. We should be adding to this area, rather than watering down the little we have by inviting development for money-making purposes.
- This proposal openly insults the thousands of citizens who have, over many decades, exerted their minds and often put their bodies on the line to protect our environment from exploitation.
- More importantly, it throws derision on the rights of future generations: the present government will not be in power for ever. Surely today's politicians have children,

grandchildren. Don't they have a right to decide for themselves if they want preservation, or exploitation?

- Once such proposals become law, it will be almost impossible for any future government to restore a degraded landscape to its original state: National Parks will very quickly be over-run by 4WD tracks, trail-bikes, horses, and other causes of erosion and weed infestation, not to mention the destructive effects of cattle grazing.
- A case in point: I am now in my 77th year. A fortnight ago I returned to a place I remembered from a visit many years ago: The Cooloola Wilderness. I was hoping to glimpse the annual springtime profusion of wildflowers, a famous Queensland icon. I returned home very despondent: the whole of the northern and western part of the Park was thoroughly burnt out - hardly a blossom to be seen. I was surprised, as I hadn't heard about bushfires in the area recently. But a small polite notice explained: this rare gem of coastal heathland, belonging to ALL QUEENSLANDERS, indeed ALL AUSTRALIANS, had been burnt by a timber company, as insurance against fire affecting the neighbouring pine plantation!

Thus, a **public asset** is destroyed to protect the profits of shareholders in a **private company**.

Is this an example of the attitudes we can expect from this government towards the hard-won, but still pitifully small areas set aside as National Parks for nature conservation, biodiversity and passive recreation?

I urge Minister Dickson and his colleagues in government to stop, think, and spend a few minutes listening to a few wonderful bird-calls in a fragment of bushland near them (if they can find one), before committing this retrograde and destructive bill to the Parliament.

I await your detailed reply.

From Charles Colman

