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The Chairman,  
Health and Community Services,  
Parliament House  
George Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

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Dear Sir,

**RE: Nature Conservation and other legislation Bill No 2 2013**

I am horrified to see the proposed changes to the Nature Conservation Act. As someone who has a keen interest in wildlife and biodiversity, has studied and educated students on ecology I have grave fears of the ramifications of this legislation. This is legislation that would not be supported by the majority of people who value our National Parks and wildlife.

1. The proposed amendment to the Object of the Act in Section 4 completely changes the purpose of the Act. No longer will it be primarily concerned with the conservation of nature, as is presently the case, but it will now have social, cultural and commercial use of protected areas as an object. The object of an Act is the first port of call by a court of law when interpreting any provision of an Act and thus is of great importance.

By changing the Object, the cardinal principle will potentially lose much of its legal strength. It has been the foundation for the protection, to the greatest possible extent, of the natural and cultural resources on National Parks. It relies on the Object for its mandate. Thus the amendments to the Object of the Act must be removed.

2. The proposed abolition of 8 classes of protected area is pointless as no areas have been declared as wilderness areas, World Heritage management areas and international agreement areas. So nothing changes by abolishing them. However, WHMAs and IGAs could have a place in the future and, for that reason should not be removed as their presence has absolutely no effect, financially or in terms of so-called green tape, on the management of protected areas.
3. Conservation parks and resources reserves have been abolished and rolled into a new class of protected area known as regional parks. This name change removes the perception of what these reserves fundamentally are. The resulting management principles will shift towards the lowest common denominator.

4. The loss of national park (scientific) and national park (recovery) must be reconsidered. The loss of these two classes of protected area achieves virtually nothing other than saving a few lines in the legislation. Rolling them both up and putting them into the national park class is a travesty and substantially undermines the level of protection that is afforded to national parks.

National parks (scientific) satisfies the IUCN category of protected area generally known as a nature reserve (the term used in NSW). These areas involve strict protection and management for a particular conservation purpose. Public access is strongly controlled. This class of national park is used for parks that protect, inter alia, bridled naitail wallabies (Taunton) and northern hairy-nosed wombats (Epping Forest). They sometimes require strong manipulation of the environment (including other native species) in order to ensure the survival of an endangered species. To simply absorb them into national parks and provide for a special management area (scientific) is unacceptable and unnecessary.

Similarly, national park (recovery), which was designed to allow for restoration of land that was destined to become national park, has been absorbed into national parks. This also makes a mockery of national parks status as the restoration requirements could take many years to achieve. Once again, there is little to be gained and much to be lost by abolishing this class of protected area. A special management area (controlled action) has been created to cater for a national park on which this work is being carried out. National park (recovery) should be retained.

National parks lose a lot by being obliged to absorb these two other protected area categories. The biggest loser is, in fact, the cardinal principle of national park management. Many activities that were legitimately carried out on national parks (scientific) and national parks (recovery) would be in breach of the cardinal principle. Consequently, the proposed action makes an absolute mockery of the cardinal principle and of national park status.

5. Forest reserve has been abolished as a tenure. It was established to act as a holding tenure in the SEQ Forest Agreement process. Many State forests that were being transferred to national park status contained a number of encumbrances (eg grazing, occupation licences etc) that had to be determined and negotiated before the land could be dedicated as national park. It has been an extremely useful holding tenure and there would appear to be no strong reason why it should no longer be available. Does the removal of forest reserve status mean the government is never going to transfer any State forests to protected area? This is not acceptable to the people of Queensland and forest reserve should be retained.

6. Management plans should not be replaced by “management statements”. Any park subject to activities that are contrary to the cardinal principle, such as tourist resort development and grazing, should have a management plan developed before such an activity could be authorised. That would ensure that the key values of the park had been clearly assessed and expressed.

Management plans are required to go through a public consultation process. It is important that some public feedback be facilitated. The public consultation step must be retained to preserve some openness in the process.

#### Conclusion

The Nature Conservation Act and the resultant protection afforded to our natural reserves is vital to the future of our natural assets. This attempt to remove many of the protective mechanisms will result in a loss of biodiversity and hence a loss of the tourism potential that they give.

Yours sincerely,

Lynn Roberts