

**From:** [Christian Hearn](#)  
**To:** [Health and Community Services Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Submission: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No2) 2013  
**Date:** Wednesday, 11 September 2013 1:00:31 PM

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To Whom it may Concern,

My name is Christian Hearn of [REDACTED] Mooloolaba, QLD, 4557. The proposed changes to National Parks Laws are deeply concerning to me, and echo the national shift back toward exploiting every possible resource down to the last penny. This is a shameful proposal and should be thrown out of parliament. We should be aiming to extend the powers that preserve our dwindling natural environment, rather than exacerbating their demise.

Some of the main issues with this legislation are as follows:

**Conservation parks and resources reserves have been abolished and rolled into a new class of protected area known as regional parks. The name should be objected to as it carries no implication of resource protection. When you combine two classes of protected area in a hierarchy, the resulting management principles tend to shift towards the lowest common denominator. That has happened with regional parks.**

**The abolition of coordinated conservation areas is not a substantial loss. It has been used sparingly and its objectives can be achieved through nature refuges.**

**The loss of national park (scientific) and national park (recovery) does need to 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 stuffing 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 nailtail 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.**

**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. Why wipe out that flexibility when it has served a very useful purpose in the past? The demise of forest reserve status would seem to reflect the governments desire not to transfer any State forests to protected area. In fact there is a move to return many forest reserves to State forest status. It is appropriate to argue that forest reserve tenure should be retained. As with other abolitions, there is nothing gained by its loss, but future opportunities have been lost if it no longer exists.**

**Revocation of a forest reserve can also take place under the Forestry Act if the forest reserve is to become a State forest. The strong requirements making it difficult to revoke a forest reserve under the NC Act are effectively sidestepped in another Act. A resolution of Parliament would no longer be involved. Smoothing the process of preventing forest reserves becoming protected areas has been facilitated by using another Act.**

**The slow rate of production of management plans for protected areas was identified in an audit of the NC Act**

some three years ago as a major departmental failing. Action has been taken in the amendments to abolish the requirement for each park, or aggregation of parks, to have a management plan. That has been replaced with a requirement to prepare a management statement. The capacity to prepare a management plan is still available, though there is no compulsion and probably very little incentive.

There would be a good case to argue in a submission that any park that was 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. That process previously had two consultation steps, but has now been reduced to one. Management statements involve no consultation with the public prior to coming into force. It is important that some public feedback be facilitated. If that does not happen, then it's difficult to know what value the management statement actually has. It would be appropriate for the submission to include a request that management statements be subject to a single public consultation process

Kind Regards,

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