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2011 Healthy Waterways Community Group Award; 2009 Queensland Landcare- Urban Landcare Award; Winner 2005 National RiverPrize, 2005, 2004 & 2003 Healthy Waterways Community Group Award; 2004 Arbor Day Regional Award Winner

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11th September, 2013

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

Submission to the Nature Conservation and other legislation Bill No. 2, 3013

Our Committee is greatly concerned about the proposed amendments to the Nature Conservation Act and their implications for our National Parks in particular.

This is supported by recent State Government initiatives to encourage new 4wd vehicles into the Moreton Island National Park areas, the allowing of grazing into all Qld National Parks, even including Fort Lytton in Brisbane, and statements by members of the State Government promoting more development opportunities and access regimes into national parks.

The following points address our concerns, and are listed for your convenience . . .

- Object of the Act (Section 4): As Minister the Hon. Steve Dickson states *“While this represents the most significant changes to the management of national parks since the introduction of the nature Conservation Act in 1992, the Act will retain its conservation focus”*. In admitting “focus” it appears that the “Objective” will be either lost or substantially undermined. Allowing three more objectives into the Act to complement the Cardinal Principal of Nature Conservation, the Act has been legally undermined, in our opinion. The new uses are highly likely to undermine the Cardinal Principal in many ways, including its dilution and legal standing in the face of unmanageable impacts and conflicting agendas.
- The three additional Objectives: While undermining the strength of the protection of nature conservation as the primary purpose, they impose a range of potentially damaging activities. All three are presently included by the management principles of each class of protected area which provide guidelines and necessary constraints on how they could apply. By allowing the three proposed changes into Protected Areas, the Act does not cover the provision of protection of wildlife outside protected areas. The current Act is undermined by placing them in such a manner in the Object. **We strongly recommend that the amendments to the Object of the Act be removed in the public interest and under our biodiversity management responsibilities globally.**
- World Heritage Management Areas (WHMAs) and International Agreement Areas (IGAs) and Wilderness Areas are abolished along with six other categories. None of these categories have so far been declared, but by removing them you have lost the flexibility of adding value to Australia’s nature conservation assets and this is out of step with the

international community and particularly sections of the United Nations. For too long, a mantra of “State of Origin” mentality pervades Queensland and leads to a perceived rejection of having international recommendations and standards applied to Queensland. By removing this flexibility for the future – we do not know what connotations this incurs and it could undermine the further development of our tourist industry in niche markets. Why can’t we promote our nature reserves and national parks in an internationally recognised and developed manner? It is a retrograde step to pretend we know best for Queensland, when the indicators are now trending the other way.

- Endangered Species: The loss of National Park “Scientific” and “Recovery” classes by putting them into the national park class will undermine protection to national parks and the ability to manage habitat impacts affecting a range of threatened and likely to be threatened species. **We recommend that these changes to not proceed as they breach the Cardinal Principal.**
- Management Plans: By requiring most protected areas to have a simple Management Statement instead of a “costly and time-consuming” Management Plan. This will be impossible to cover the increased uses proposed by the State Government. The introduction of ATVs for instance would need a management plan in place to have any chance of providing guidelines for such a damaging use and inability to either regulate or monitor. Grazing and Tourism developments would need up-front, carefully crafted management planning to prevent a range of impacts on national parks and conservation areas. To “cut red tape” the Government will expose our conservation assets to a difficult to control and regulate wide range of human induced impacts and potentially vested interests not interested in the wider values to Qld and the general community.

It appears that a short-term economic agenda could destroy future economic benefits from eco-tourism.

We believe, in seeking a single bottom-line economic development agenda and applying it to our small percentage of protected natural areas and national parks will have a huge impact on the Nature Conservation assets of Queensland.

There are a range of opportunities to bring our National Parks into play for local and international tourism and help that sector develop an Asian market into the future. To do this we have to protect and improve the very values of nature conservation, landscape amenity and wilderness experience that we currently possess.

The State Government has developed a set of plans and has not consulted with the community, but may well have read into the agendas of vested interests – particularly mobility groups seeking more experiences. For instance, ATVs and dirt bikes scour the ground, remove barricades and deliberately dig out replanted native vegetation, that is clearly marked as such, merely to improve their vehicle runs.

These potentially high-impact uses, including mountain bikes, that presents itself as “nature-based recreation”, are proving an on-going management problem in Brisbane. The small network of Nature Reserves in Brisbane are under constant pressure from mountain bikes. They have deliberately destroyed areas of Mt Gravatt, Whites Hill and other smaller reserves. These impacts are difficult to police by Council and much “blind-eyeing” has ensued. Over time all of our hilly nature reserves have been systematically degraded by this lead-in recreational group.

To provide opportunities to potentially damaging vehicles (human mobility and mechanical) in national parks, which are far removed from normal policing or management, will lead to a demise in those parks over time and could damage the reputation of the State Government.

We are asking the State Government to reconsider this course of action, that we believe, will degrade our natural heritage, future opportunities in tourism and obligations to protect native ecosystems and wildlife.

We propose a genuine and transparent process of community consultation to ensure the protection of our natural values and future opportunities – by developing ideas that consider the sustainability of developments in the context of our responsibilities to natural heritage.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Wayne Cameron.

Wayne Cameron
Catchment Manager