

13th September, 2013

Health and Community Services Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000



[www.biepa.org](http://www.biepa.org)

**Bribie Island Environmental  
Protection Association Inc  
PO Box 350  
Bribie Island Qld 4507**

**Submissions to the Nature Conservation and other legislation  
Bill (No 2) 2013**

Dear Sirs/Mesdames

A sign to Bribie Island welcomes residents and visitors alike as they leave the mainland to cross the bridge: ***Sanctuary - Fauna and Flora Protected.***

A significant proportion of Bribie Island is protected by National Park status, Ramsar, CMS and Moreton Bay Marine Park designation. The Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association (BIEPA) has been working for 35 years, protecting and "*Caring for our special habitat and its residents*".

To date, these designations have afforded Bribie Island some protection from rampant abuse by development and recreational activities. However, we fear that the retrograde changes the Newman Government proposes with the *Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013* will change that protection and so change the integrity of Bribie Island's fragile and iconic natural assets forever.

BIEPA would support strengthening the Nature Conservation Act 1992. When enacted, it was considered cutting edge conservation legislation but in light of its failure to arrest biodiversity decline in Queensland (Australia), BIEPA would support a review to strengthen, not weaken, the Nature Conservation Act 1992 in order to bring its legal and legislative protection of Australia's iconic fauna and flora species into the 21st Century. The Newman Government is planning to weaken the purpose of the 1992 Act that will set conservation in Queensland back decades. With only 4.8% of the State's land set aside as habitat for native flora and fauna species to be protected under National Parks status, these amendments are not wise proposals and reflect a lack of understanding of the Laws of Nature by the Newman Government.

Surprisingly, the Hon Steve Dickson is reported as stating that, '*Unashamedly I am looking to make money out of this*' - referring to throwing national parks open to developers and tourist operators. With the Minister's use of "I" and not "Government" in this statement, should it be assumed that this "money" will not be for all Queenslanders?

Minister Dickson indicated that the Bill will result in the most significant changes as to how National Parks will be managed. The prime purpose for National Parks no longer will be conservation of wildlife and habitat. The Cardinal Principle of management - *a national park is managed to the greatest possible extent for the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition* - will be totally contradicted with these amendments. Minister Dickson's framing of the amendments is misleading and contradictory.

Today, the primary purpose of National Parks ostensibly is to afford protection to and conserve Australia's natural heritage, landscape and cultural heritage. A secondary purpose is to allow people to commune with and interact with Nature in passive ways (to ensure a sensitive footprint). This well

established management principle has been guiding management of National Parks in Queensland for many years and for the Newman Government to consider exploiting National Parks primarily to service the State's debts, is betraying not only Queenslanders but Australians and our responsibility to protect and conserve Nature for the greater good. These retrograde amendments to the Nature Conservation Act 1992 will be tantamount to further mismanagement of Queensland's natural assets in an effort to fix past mismanagement of the State's resources. The long-term effect will be a huge environmental and social debt, which also will become a huge economic debt. These amendments are short-sighted without vision and wisdom.

In this day and age BIEPA considers it is the duty of every member of the human species to be responsible for the protection of the Earth's natural assets upon which all species depend for survival.

However, when we have our representatives in government suggesting that our natural assets exist mainly to be exploited by profiteers, then we have a serious conflict of interest between what is in the long-term best interests of the public and our natural assets and the short-term interests of profiteers.

It is extremely disconcerting when our representatives in the Newman government respond to BIEPA's concerns as follows: ***“Green groups are spreading ill-informed, alarmist untruths in a desperate grab to remain relevant and grab newspaper headlines. The LNP Government is determined to close the chapter on 20 years of Labor over-regulation of vegetation management. Reduce red tape on landowners through the removal of regrowth regulations on freehold land and Indigenous land. The Newman LNP Government rejects claims from extreme environmental group WWF Australia, that changes to Queensland's vegetation laws will damage ecosystems.”*** So-called “Green groups” are mostly made up of well educated, caring and kind people who contribute greatly to their communities and society in general. To suggest they are *ill-informed, alarmist, untruthful, desperate and irrelevant* reflects how out of touch the Newman government is with the tax base of Queensland.

After studying the Minister's proposed changes, BIEPA is concerned that there are serious implications, because the amendments fundamentally alter the legal interpretation of the Act. This would allow any developer with a good lawyer to be able to get away with almost anything in our National Parks.

Also, if an environmental group decides to challenge any of this once it becomes law, it (the challenging group) will have to totally fund the challenge and pay the defendant's costs if the case is unsuccessful. Essentially, this means that no group will be able to challenge any developer, council nor government in Queensland over an environmental issue. This is not a level playing field.

BIEPA respectfully asks the Health and Community Services Committee to reject the amendments of this Bill (No2) 2013 and, instead, recommends a review in order to determine how the Act can be strengthened to ensure the legal Rights of Nature are protected and conserved, in the remaining small percentage of Queensland's iconic natural assets designated as National Parks, for future generations.

Bill (No 2) 2013, effectively, will relieve Queenslanders of their democratic rights regarding having a voice in how their natural assets are managed.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Proudfoot  
President  
for BIEPA Management Committee

*“Caring for our special habitat and its residents”*