

Environmental Protection (Efficiency and Streamlining) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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Coolum and North Shore Coast Care (CaNSCC) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission in response to the Inquiry into the Environmental Protection (Efficiency and Streamlining) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

CaNSCC is a volunteer based environmental organisation that has been actively involved in coastal conservation, habitat restoration, wildlife protection, citizen science and community education across the Coolum and North Shore region for over 20 years. Our work provides us with first hand insight into the cumulative pressures facing coastal and terrestrial ecosystems and the critical role that robust environmental regulation plays in protecting them.

While we acknowledge the intent to improve administrative efficiency and streamline regulatory processes, we hold serious concerns that some of the proposed amendments may significantly weaken environmental safeguards and protection, reduce transparency and increase long term risks to ecosystem function.

CaNSCC strongly supports

- * strengthening powers for the court to order forfeiture of property to stop an ongoing offence
- * increasing the time limitations for commencing summary proceedings for offences, to ensure complex offences may still be prosecuted
- * NC Act to expand the functions of conservation officers,
- * continuing to apply the native title assessment pathways in the grant of permits as set out under the NT Act, the Bill preserves cultural rights.

CaNSCC does not support

- * The intention that "EP Act to strengthen the role of the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the department) as a transparent and efficient regulator by modernising the management of environmentally relevant activities (ERAs)" as it fails to mention environmental protection which should be included
- * The amendments trigger changes to regulatory arrangements for small scale mining that will involve removing the requirement for operators to pay a financial surety, resulting in cost savings for both industry and government.
- * EP Act to strengthen the role of the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the department) as a transparent and efficient regulator by modernising the management of environmentally relevant activities (ERAs) as it fails to mention environmental protection
- * Removal of public interest evaluation process for Progressive Rehabilitation and Closure Plans
- 8 Removal of requirements to publicly notify terms of reference for environmental impact statements

CaNSCC central concern is that the proposed changes prioritise efficiency over environmental protection. Streamlining approval processes would most likely result in:

- Reduced scrutiny of environmentally significant activities
- Shortened assessment timeframes at the expense of thorough ecological review -Increased reliance on self assessment or proponent-led reporting

In practice, this creates a heightened risk of environmentally harmful activities being approved without adequate consideration of long term or cumulative impacts particularly in sensitive coastal, marine, wetland and wildlife habitats.

Many species and ecosystems in South East Queensland are already under pressure from climate change, coastal development, habitat fragmentation and human disturbance. Weakening assessment and compliance mechanisms run the risk of further:

- Increase habitat loss or degradation
- Undermine protections for threatened and migratory species
- Reduce early detection and mitigation of environmental harm

From our direct experience in turtle monitoring, dune and bush restoration and wildlife protection, even small changes in environmental management can have outsized impacts on species survival and ecosystem resilience.

Community groups, Traditional Owners and local environmental organisations play a critical role in environmental stewardship. We are concerned that the proposed amendments would:

- Limit opportunities for public consultation
- Reduce the ability of community stakeholders to provide meaningful input -Weaken transparency and accountability in decision-making processes

Local knowledge and citizen science data are often essential in identifying environmental risks that may not be evident in high level assessments. Reducing these voices undermines informed and balanced environmental governance.

Effective environmental legislation relies not only on approvals, but on strong compliance and enforcement mechanisms. We hold serious concerns that streamlining reforms may:

- Reduce monitoring and compliance capacity

- Lower penalties or enforcement thresholds
- Shift responsibility away from regulators

Without strong enforcement, there is an increased risk that environmental harm will go undetected, unreported or unaddressed, resulting in long term ecological damage that is costly or impossible to remediate. Environmental degradation carries long-term economic, social and cultural costs. Healthy ecosystems underpin tourism, recreation, fisheries, community wellbeing, and climate resilience. Legislative changes that erode environmental protections may result in:

- Increased costs of environmental remediation
- Loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Reduced community trust in environmental governance

Efficiency gains in the short term must not come at the expense of irreversible environmental damage.

Coolum and North Shore Coast Care urges the Inquiry to:

1. Ensure environmental protection remains the primary objective of the legislation, not a secondary consideration
2. Retain strong, independent assessment processes for activities with potential environmental impact
3. Protect and enhance community consultation rights, particularly for local and volunteer environmental groups
4. Maintain robust compliance and enforcement mechanisms to ensure accountability
5. Explicitly consider cumulative and long-term environmental impacts, particularly in coastal and climate vulnerable regions

In conclusion we strongly support efficient governance; however, efficiency must not come at the cost of weakened environmental protection.

Once ecosystems are degraded or species lost, the impacts are irreversible.

We respectfully submit that the proposed amendments, as currently framed, present significant risks to Queensland's natural environment and undermine the collective efforts of community groups working to protect it.

We urge the Inquiry to carefully reconsider the proposed changes and ensure that environmental protection, transparency, and community involvement remain central to Queensland's legislative framework.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.