



## **Submission to Land Tenure Inquiry**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our views to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry on land tenure issues in Queensland.

Queensland Conservation (QCC) is the peak environment organisation in Queensland, representing most of the key environmental advocacy organisations in the State.

As we understand it the current Inquiry will be looking at (amongst other things) a review of tenure arrangements inside National Parks and a review of existing land use agreements and leasehold land tenures.

Given the short time frame for submissions we have focussed our attention on providing headline issues that we believe need to be considered.

### **Management of National Parks is governed and must remain governed by a cardinal principle**

That cardinal principle is:

*To provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition and the protection of the area's cultural resources and values.*

The State Government defines *natural condition* as 'protection from human interference - allowing natural processes to proceed'.

The application of this principle does not prohibit managed visitation and educational opportunities within National Parks, but does prevent the establishment of commercially-oriented accommodation facilities and other recreational activities such as horse riding and motorised vehicle uses, within National Parks.

All these activities are more appropriately located in suitable areas outside of National Parks.

**Queensland has a small, protected area estate in comparison with Worlds Best Practice and other jurisdictions.**

Queensland has just over 5% of its landmass in National Parks and a small percentage of lands under other forms of protection. In the current debate about the provision of greater access to National Parks for commercial tourism and other recreational activities, comparisons are often drawn between New Zealand and USA-countries that do allow such access.

However, both New Zealand (NZ) and USA have a considerably larger percentage of landmass under protection. According to authorities in those jurisdictions, the USA has about 27% of landmass under protection and NZ over 30%. These lands are protected for conservation, heritage, cultural and recreational purposes.

Both of these jurisdictions maintain a percentage of their protected estate primarily for nature conservation, in the case of the USA 12% and in the case of NZ 30%.

If Queensland is to follow a similar approach it should ensure that National Parks are primarily for the purposes of nature conservation (a comparable approach to both NZ and USA) and then build a significantly larger protected area estate, which will support access for tourism, cultural and recreational purposes. The State is lucky in this regard and has significant opportunities to do this. Building an appropriately sized protected area estate-equivalent to either NZ or the USA –would provide

a more diverse range of access opportunities and take the pressure off the current National Park estate.

### **Honour existing Land Use Agreements**

Two agreements have been developed through negotiations between government, industry and conservationists, the Delbessie Agreement and the State Forest Agreement.

The Delbessie Agreement-negotiated with Agforce- provides for the maintenance of good condition of pastoral leases through incentives for longer lease arrangements. The agreement also provides for identification of future National Park and 'biodiversity hot spots'.

The State Forest Agreements-negotiated with Timber Queensland- provide for a transition of timber harvesting from state forest to plantation. This is a more reliable and cost effective option for industry, whilst supporting the conservation of higher value conservation lands.

The State supports the establishment of Nature Refuges on public and private land. These refuges are important for the protection of vital habitat and essential ecosystems. The expansion of nature refuges is a legitimate means of expanding the protected area estate. However, nature refuges are not protected from activities that could destroy their ecological values, such as mining operations.

Nature refuges should be given more permanent protection. These areas could be established and maintained under IUCN categories 1-1V. Depending upon the categories, these also allow for sustainable grazing on properties but not inappropriate activities such as mining.

### **Transfer of leasehold to freehold**

The fact that over 60% of Queensland is crown leasehold land is a considerable advantage to the State. It allows the state to provide opportunities to graziers whilst ensuring the opportunity remains to improve the condition of the estate, particularly through arrangements such as the Delbessie Agreement.

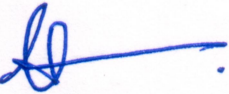
With carbon farming and the need to sequester GHG emissions an emerging, vital function for the future, the continuation of the leasehold estate is important. Clearly carbon sequestration will also provide revenue and value to both the State and to landholders in the future and is best managed through current arrangements.

With global food security becoming an issue, the transfer of tenure from leasehold to freehold presents a number of challenges for the State, given the strong likelihood that overseas interests will be the most obvious investors in the Queensland estate. Whilst the State may be able, in the first instance, to resist overseas ownership of the estate, it is unlikely that this could be maintained in the future.

### **Further Information**

A number of our member organisations have provided more detailed submissions and we draw your attention to these. Should the Inquiry require further information or a conservation representative to address the inquiry, QCC would be pleased to assist in arranging an appropriate representative.

Regards



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Executive Director