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IH &amp; C Herbert

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3 August 2012



The Research Director  
 State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee  
 Parliament House  
 George Street  
 BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Inquiry into the future and continued relevance of Government land tenure across Queensland**

In making this submission we are only addressing the second point of the Terms of Reference. viz “The balanced protection of Queensland’s ecological values”.

We are alarmed at the Newman government’s plans for our precious National Parks. National Parks make up less than 5% of Qld. They protect our unique plants and animals from damaging activity. They also provide access to the general public and tourists for nature based recreation, such as bushwalking and camping.

We are concerned that changes to National Parks management proposed by the Newman government threaten to undermine the ‘*Cardinal Principle*’ of National Parks, which is “To provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent preservation of the area’s natural condition, while allowing activities which are nature-based and ecologically sustainable.”

Spending by tourists directly associated with visiting National Parks contributes hundreds of millions of dollars per annum to the Qld economy. Despite this the Premier has stated that National Parks should be “opened up”; when clearly they are already open.

National Parks are the only areas where the natural environment comes first. This means that there is more to National Parks than dollar making machines. The vast majority of Queenslanders recognise that National Parks are very special places and deserve the highest level of protection.

Commercialisation should not take place within the boundaries of National Parks and the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* should not be amended to allow this. The profitability of ecotourism businesses is limited and there will be great pressure to increase numbers in order to make any money at all. This has the potential to threaten the natural values that need to be protected.

Horse riding should continue to be prohibited from all National Parks. We believe that there is a community need for sufficient scenic areas to be made available for horse riding and these areas should be identified and maintained for that purpose but outside the National Park system.

‘Recreational’ four-wheel driving should not be permitted in National Parks. The only four-wheel driving allowed should be that required for access on existing tracks maintained for that purpose in accordance with the area’s Management Plan. In particular there should be no expansion of four-wheel driving onto beaches where it is not presently allowed, and every effort should be made to limit beach four-wheel drive traffic elsewhere. Beaches are not highways and many overseas tourists are amazed at how poorly we treat our beautiful beaches.

We are very concerned that many people who are interested in the future well-being of National Parks would not have been aware that National Parks are being examined as part of an Inquiry into Land Tenure. These people have missed out on an opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

Ian and Cathy Herbert