



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

3 August 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) welcomes to opportunity to provide advice on land tenure matters to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry.

ACF is a not-for-profit community organisation committed to inspiring people to achieve a healthy environment for all Australians. For 40 years we have been a strong voice for the environment, promoting solutions through research, consultation, education and partnerships. We work with the community, business and government to protect, restore and sustain our environment.

Our organisation has a strong interest in land tenure arrangements in Queensland including protection and maintenance of national parks, Aboriginal ownership and joint management of national parks, and a number of unallocated state held lands on Cape York Peninsula.

More detailed submissions from other Queensland conservation groups address a wider range of issues than we have provided here in the short time frame. ACF are of the view that nature conservation, through the expansion of a national park's estate is still urgently required across Queensland particularly in bioregions under-represented within the national reserve system. Further, this expansion must be accompanied with a commensurate resourcing to adequately management natural and cultural values.

ACF has a particular interest in land tenure on Cape York and, apart from some brief comments on national parks, our short submission is dedicated to this area of interest and expertise.

National Parks

National Parks, throughout the world, are a primary mechanism for conservation and a fundamental foundation for a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system.



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Within national parks, it is fundamental that the natural ecological and evolutionary processes are allowed to continue.

Commercial or private recreational activities such as accommodation development, horse riding or motorised vehicle use, are more appropriate outside of national parks and sensitive ecological areas.

Land Tenure Reform on Cape York Peninsula

Under the Cape York Land Tenure Resolution process, State held land is returned back to Traditional Owners as both Aboriginal Freehold and as Aboriginal owned national park, roughly on a 50/50 split.

All existing national parks on Cape York are also in the process of being transferred to Aboriginal Title under the *Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007*. To-date this has included the former Mitchel-Alice Rivers, Lakefield, Iron Range, Mungkan Kandju and a number of island national parks.

Arising from the historic 1996 signing of the Cape York Heads of Agreement, land tenure reform was not implemented by the Queensland Government until 2004. In a unique process, new national parks such as KULLA (McIlwraith Range), Lama Lama, Alwal National Parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land).

Built into the process of land tenure reform on Cape York are economic development and assistance packages, and support for capacity building and governance of Aboriginal organisations.

This process has been overseen by Cape York Tenure Resolution Implementation Group (CYTRIG), made up of Indigenous, conservation and government representatives.

Current Status:

The land tenure reform process is a work in progress. Negotiations for many properties yet to be resolved including Shelburne, Batavia and many others (approx. 10-15 other properties), totalling over 1 million hectares have already taken place with a number of Traditional Owner groups.

Prior to the Queensland election, further properties were acquired using some of the \$20million Federal Government funding announced in 2011. This came out of the National Reserve System budget.

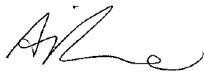
Existing national parks such as Jardine River, Cape Melville and a number of others are yet to be returned to Traditional Owners.

Key Ask:

Maintain the existing property acquisition and land tenure reform process on Cape York Peninsula which with the consent of Traditional Owners both creates new national parks on high conservation value land and Aboriginal freehold land on a 50/50 basis, and transfers existing national parks to Aboriginal ownership, with the aim of completing the transfer of all outstanding properties and parks to Aboriginal ownership within the next term of government.

Joint park management arrangements between the State and Traditional Owners (under the *Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007*) must continue to be supported and adequately resourced, and the oversight role played by CYTRIG, including Traditional Owner and conservation group representation, must be retained.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Picone
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Australian Conservation Foundation