



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

Friday, 3 August 2012

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

The Wilderness Society submits the following to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee, with particular focus on tenure issues pertaining to **Cape York Peninsula** –

THE TENURE SYSTEM as it applies in Cape York Peninsula has undergone significant changes over the last one to two decades, consistent with similar patterns across the Northern Australia.

As Emeritus Professor, John Holmes, of the University of Queensland, has noted on Land Tenure and Administration in the Savannas<sup>1</sup> “it is here that the pastoral interest is tenuous and other interests, including Aboriginal traditional occupancy, are most substantial. There has been a persistent transfer of pastoral lease titles into other tenures, with a net reduction in the area held under leases by over 22 per cent in the period 1974-1994, a process still continuing”. In regions “where pastoral values are very modest”, non-pastoral values “are increasingly important. These include Aboriginal traditional use, tourism and recreation, and preservation of biodiversity and valued landscapes, among other uses”.

Cape York Peninsula has been at the forefront of these changes, with native title claims, land use reform (including to achieve protection of identified high-conservation-values), and the marginal viability of the pastoral industry, all driving tenure change and new land use agreements and partnerships.

The opportunities for Indigenous land ownership, management and enterprise - and for a tourism industry based on the globally-significant natural and cultural values of the region – have multiplied with the success of the ‘State Land Dealings’ on Cape York.

The Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act marked a breakthrough in securing the long-term protection of Cape York's extraordinary natural environment. The Act, passed on 17 October 2007, received bi-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.savanna.cdu.edu.au/view/28923/land-tenure-and-administration-in-the-savannas.html#tenure>

partisan support, and was developed following consultations with Indigenous, conservation, pastoral and other interests.

This Act and associated laws and regulations are the culmination of considerable policy development and implementation, and provide an agreed framework for achieving Indigenous, conservation, pastoral, tourism and other goals.

The objectives of the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007 are:

1. to identify significant natural and cultural values of Cape York Peninsula,
2. to provide for cooperative management, protection and ecologically sustainable use of land, including pastoral land, in Cape York Peninsula,
3. to recognise the economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations of indigenous communities on Cape York Peninsula in relation to land use, and;
4. to recognise the contribution of the pastoral industry in Cape York Peninsula to the economy and land management.

The Act achieves the objectives by providing for:

1. the declaration of areas of international conservation significance
2. the cooperative involvement of landholders in the management of the natural and cultural values of Cape York Peninsula
3. the continuance of an environmentally sustainable pastoral industry as a form of land use in Cape York Peninsula
4. the declaration of Indigenous community use areas in which Indigenous communities may undertake appropriate economic activities and
5. the establishment of committees to provide advice on the implementation of the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act

Development and conservation can and should go hand in hand in Cape York. World Heritage, wild rivers, better land management - and the economic prospects coming from these initiatives - should significantly enhance employment opportunities for the people of the region. The Wilderness Society recommends the Government continue with this program of land justice and conservation, coupled with investment in sustainable economic development.

The Wilderness Society is of the view that the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee should endorse the innovative and sensible reforms and developments of the last 10 – 20 years on Cape York Peninsula, so that the twin goals of land justice and conservation, alongside ecologically sustainable development, continue to occur.

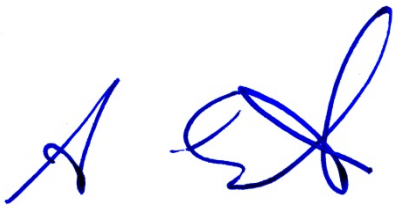
The State should also continue to play an active role in regulating and excluding environmentally-harmful activities across all tenures, and ensure the intact regional landscape of Cape York Peninsula is protected and managed.

Inclusive management frameworks such as World Heritage should be adopted to ensure the future protection, management and sustainable development of the region occurs with the cooperation of traditional owners and other landholders, and across multiple tenures.

We are available and willing to elaborate on these matters and discuss them at a hearing of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

*Anthony Esposito*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

*National manager – Indigenous Conservation  
The Wilderness Society Inc.*

*Dr Tim Seelig*

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a bold, stylized 'T' followed by a horizontal line.

*Queensland Campaign Manager  
The Wilderness Society (Qld ) Inc.*

***The Wilderness Society***

***Office: 67 Boundary Street, West End, QLD, 4101***

***Postal: PO Box 5427, West End, QLD, 4101***

***Phone: 07 3846 1420***