

25 February 2014

Supplementary submission No. 88
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11.1.14

The Research Director
State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
sdiic@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Calls for Supplementary Submissions to the Qld Parliamentary Inquiry into the *Regional Planning Interests Bill 2013*

The Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC) is the peak regional environmental advocacy group on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. Established in 1980 it currently represents 50 community groups working on conservation and sustainability with a combined membership of over 15,000 individuals.

Following examination of proposed Regional Planning Interests legislation and the issues raised or not raised in the context of earlier submissions and presentations to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee, the Sunshine Coast Environment Council wish to make the following supplementary submission to the Inquiry into the Regional Planning Interests Bill 2013.

We have a range of concerns with the Bill which we don't believe have been adequately addressed in the Inquiry process to date. These include:

- The Bill failing to clearly prohibit mining, industrial or large-scale agricultural activity or other destructive development in ecologically sensitive areas, including but not limited to Strategic Environmental Areas under current or intended regional plans.
- The Bill failing to explicitly place protection of ecological values, including Wild River High Preservation Areas and Special Floodplain Management Areas, and World Heritage standard landscapes, over the interests of mining and destructive development, and failing to provide certainty that such resource applications will be refused. Rather than a principle of 'assumed coexistence', I believe the Precautionary Principle should be applied to ensure risks to ecological values are removed.
- The Bill creating loopholes around small scale mining activity in current Wild River Declarations on Cape York and in Western Queensland.
- The Bill not allowing for public/third party appeals regarding regional interests assessment and decisions, nor public/third party appeals regarding changes to an Environmental Authority arising from the granting of a Regional Interests Authority.

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- The Bill failing to provide transparency because significant components of the legislation will only be included in a Regulation which is not available for public scrutiny.
- The Bill granting sweeping powers of discretion to the Director-General of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, such that she or he may be directed or pressured to allow mining applications in Strategic Environmental Areas (SEAs) or other sensitive areas.

Overall, our organisation and the extensive membership we represent are very concerned about the pace of the process for the proposed Regional Planning Interests legislation and the Inquiry instructed to examine it. The subordination of a range of important details to a Regulation, and the absence of the intended Regulation for any public examination, makes it difficult to fully assess how the Bill will work in practice.

Given the depth of our concerns regarding this legislation representing another retrograde and misguided move relating to necessary environmental protections in Queensland, we urge you and the Committee to seek to have the Bill withdrawn and its replacement with strengthened protections for SEAs and other recognised areas of ecological value, or substantial amendment to achieve such environmental protection outcomes.

Yours sincerely

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Sunshine Coast Environment Council