

**Margaret Telford**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 25 June 2014 1:42 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** State Development Infrastructure and Industry Committee  
**Subject:** Wild Rivers Submission  
  
**Categories:** Submission

The Research Director  
State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
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Dear Sir/Madam

**Re State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee consideration of the State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014**

We are writing to you regarding the above Inquiry and would like this material to be accepted as a formal submission to the Committee. We are totally opposed to the sections of the *State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* (the Bill) at least to the extent that it seeks to repeal the *Wild Rivers Act 2005*.

The reasons we are taking this position is because we believe that the Bill will lead to the removal of vital river protections that have been in place in Queensland for the past ten years. We consider the case for its removal has not been successfully made and that the alternatives currently proposed are weak, complex and lack transparency.

Queensland is blessed to retain some of the last remaining, pristine or near pristine waterways left of the planet. The need for strong state legislation protecting wild rivers in Queensland was broadly recognised and accepted more than a decade ago. The *Wild Rivers Act 2005* was passed with full support of the Queensland Parliament.

The *Wild Rivers Act 2005* and its associated Wild River Declarations was created to protect the ecological values of many of these across the State. Wild River Declarations have ensured that new destructive development such as mining, dams and intensive irrigated agriculture has been prohibited in the most sensitive parts of the those river systems, whilst allowing a wide range of economic, cultural, social and recreational activities and uses are unaffected. Rights under the Native Title Act were protected and a number of commercial enterprises, including Indigenous-run ones, have operated in Wild River areas unhindered.

The alternative 'Strategic Environmental Area' (SEA) approach to rivers protection in Queensland being put forward by the government is too weak in its approach to restricting mining and other destructive development in sensitive river areas, and loses the capacity under Wild Rivers to ensure comprehensive management of whole river systems. The proposed SEA alternatives to Wild Rivers and the processes detailing allowable and restricted activities are also embedded in a complex web of legislation and administrative systems and processes.

Most critically, the proposed SEA alternatives to Wild Rivers are open to arbitrary amendment and lack the transparency and precision that Wild River Declarations have provided in terms of geographic boundaries. Parliament should retain the capacity to scrutinise Ministerially-endorsed mapped areas purporting to protect rivers. We don't understand why the government is moving to repeal the *Wild Rivers Act*, when this was never foreshadowed in the last State election, nor mooted in any public policy discussions. We believe no clear case has been made for this action.

Shirl and I believe that Queensland's wild rivers are too ecologically, culturally and socially important to once again be exposed to destructive development threats. We urge the Committee to recommend against the proposed repeal of the *Wild Rivers Act*, as proposed in the Bill under examination.

Yours sincerely Wanda Grabowski and Shirley McRae  
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