

21.04.11

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Legislation Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

CANBERRA

ACT 2600

## **Inquiry into Indigenous economic development in Queensland and Review of the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010.**

To whom it may concern

Australia Zoo has been involved in and made submissions to the Private Members Bill to both the Senate and House of Representatives.

I refer to the submission from Harold Ludwick dated 04.04.2011 to the Senate Standing Legislation Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

In response, I would like to clarify the following:

**1) Ludwick makes reference to the acquisition of the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve (SIWR): *“a cattle station was bought for Terry (sic) Irwin’s Conservation”.***

To clarify; The Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve was of such recognised environmental value that it deserved special recognition from the government. In 2007, Australia Zoo was invited by the Federal Government to identify and manage a conservation property as a tribute to Steve Irwin and his work.

As its contribution, Australia Zoo offered to undertake the full costs of extensive research, conservation and the management of the Reserve in perpetuity.

Australia Zoo has contributed over \$1 million for this work in the first 2 years of stewardship of this land. The 135 000 hectare “Bertiehaugh” became the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve and is now part of the National Reserve System Programme for the purpose of nature conservation.

Terri Irwin and Australia Zoo do not own, or have any financial interest in any cattle on the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve.

There are approximately 1,000 head of cattle on part of the property away from ecologically threatened areas. All cattle operations are run by the local family who had been farming cattle there prior to Australia Zoo purchasing the property.

The continuation of the pastoral lease for cattle is a requirement of the State Government.

The heritage listed Bertiehaugh dry vine forests have been excised from the cattle area.

The watering points and fencing, both existing and planned, are for the purpose of containing cattle movements and consequent protection of the ecologically sensitive areas.

2) Ludwick makes reference to Australia Zoo's relationship and consultation with Indigenous groups and Traditional Owners: *"a black face would appear in articles for Terry (sic) Irwin and the Wilderness Society which I personally feel were of Tokenistic value only"*

To clarify: Australia Zoo has always acknowledged opportunities here in Australia and internationally. We have developed or been involved in the following initiatives and partnerships since the declaration of the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve in August 2007:

- Australia Zoo has been working towards developing an 'Indigenous **Land Use Agreement**' with the **Traditional Owners of the SIWR**.
- **Signed Memorandum of Understanding** with the Queensland Government through the Department of Environment and Resource Management to provide training in natural resource management and wildlife research with Indigenous Wild River Ranger units, including training at Australia Zoo.
- Development of draft Memorandum of Understanding with **Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council** to undertake co – operative natural resource management and ecological research/monitoring initiatives.
- Participation in, and delivery of training in wildlife survey work with **Mapoon Aboriginal Rangers on Mapoon country**, as part of a wetland biodiversity survey with Cape York Marine Advisory Group (CYMAG).
- Co – operative ecological/cultural survey work with **Mapoon Aboriginal Rangers** on the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve and adjacent Mapoon 'Deed of Grant in Trust' lands.
- Delivery of training in crocodile capture/research with **Kaanju Aboriginal Rangers** on the SIWR.
- Support/assistance with marine turtle rescue, and rehabilitation of marine turtles with **Napranum and Mapoon Aboriginal Ranger units**.
- This has included satellite tracking of rehabilitated **endangered Olive Ridley Turtles**.
- Employment initially of a **Tepathigghi Traditional Owner** as a Ranger on the SIWR, with more engagements planned.

In addition, in the broader Cape York community, Australia Zoo has:

- Delivered educational talks on wildlife/conservation at (Weipa) Western Cape Colleges from Years 1 – 12, Napranum Pre School, Mapoon State School, and Bamaga State School.
- Delivered crocodile and snake awareness sessions to 'Rio Tinto' employees at Weipa.
- Undertaken vertebrate wildlife surveys for the South Cape York Catchment Group at Keatings Lagoon via Cooktown as part of an extensive monitoring program in relation to the erection of pig exclusion fencing.
- Undertaken vertebrate wildlife surveys as part of a broader wetland biodiversity survey at the Muck River area, adjacent to the Cape Melville National Park, in conjunction with CYMAG.

We thank the Senate once again for allowing us the opportunity to responding to this enquiry.