



23 April 2010

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
c/- Committee Secretary
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

**Re Questions on Notice arising from Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation
Committee Inquiry into *Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010 [No.2]***

Please find enclosed responses on behalf of the Wilderness Society to the Questions on Notice received via you from Senator Heffernan.

In receiving these questions and considering responses to them, it is necessary to highlight that the questions posed have nothing whatsoever to do with either the Abbott/Scullion private member's bills *Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010*, nor with the Queensland *Wild Rivers Act 2005*.

The Submission from The Wilderness Society to this Senate Inquiry has already highlighted the many deficiencies with *Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010* as proposed legislation, as did our opening presentation and evidence provided at the Cairns hearing of the Inquiry.

The questions posed by Senator Heffernan are not designed to inform his or anyone else's understanding of the Wild Rivers initiative in Queensland, nor of how the *Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010* is supposed to work. Instead, Senator Heffernan has chosen to ask about The Wilderness Society itself as far as some of our work on Cape York is concerned, whether we receive government funding, and who we might provide funding to on Cape York.

We provide responses to the questions recognising that such responses will do nothing to further Senator Heffernan's appreciation of an important conservation initiative operating across many parts of Queensland (Wild Rivers), and the many good reasons for why the Bill before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee should not be supported.

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To the best of my knowledge, these answers are accurate and correct as of today.

Kind regards

Dr Tim Seelig
State Campaign Manager
The Wilderness Society Queensland

Legal & Con. Committee: Questions on Notice No. 3
Inquiry into Wild River Legislation
Hearing in Cairns, 13 April 2010

Department/ Agency: Wilderness Society
Senator Heffernan

Question 1: How does the Wilderness Society plan to protect Cape York peninsular from wild fires, feral pigs and feral cattle considering the size of Cape York Peninsula is approx 11 million hectares?

Cape York Peninsula needs more land managers and better resourcing to carry out this work, and the Wilderness Society has consistently advocated for this. Some examples of our successful advocacy include:

1. The Queensland Government increasing funding to National Parks on Cape York Peninsula by \$20 million as a result of our “Lands in Crisis” report (which criticised the lack of resources to manage fire, weeds, etc). The report can be viewed here:
<http://www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/northern-australia/pdf/CYP-ParksReport.pdf>
2. The Queensland Government creating 30 Indigenous Wild River Ranger jobs (with another 70 to come), as a direct result of policy advocacy from the Wilderness Society in 2006. These rangers are employed by local Indigenous groups, and actively manage invasive weeds and feral animals, fire, etc. The program has been an overwhelming success and won a special Queensland Premier’s award in 2009 . Read more about the program here:
http://www.regionalnrm.qld.gov.au/policies_plans_legislation/policies_strategies/wild_river_rangers.html
3. Our work with a number of Indigenous groups on “Indigenous Protected Area” proposals, which seeks to increase resources and jobs to local people to actively manage invasive weeds and feral animals, fire, and so on. So far one Indigenous Protected Area has been created on Cape York as a direct result of our cooperative work with the Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation.
4. Our advocacy for World Heritage listing for appropriate parts of Cape York Peninsula is founded on the idea that such a listing would greatly help to increase resources for local people to actively manage invasive weeds and feral animals, fire, etc. A World Heritage management plan for Cape York Peninsula would greatly help coordinate work to manage these ongoing and serious threats to the environment.
5. We also applied for funding under the Federal Government’s *Caring for our Country* scheme (July 2009) to bring together a range of expert stakeholders, including Indigenous land managers and scientists, to develop a system for more efficient and effective allocation of conservation resources to manage threats like invasive weeds, feral animals, poor fire

management, etc. We were unsuccessful in this our application but will continue to develop and seek investment in natural and cultural resource management strategies.

Question 2: Can I have an outline of your programmes to address each of these issues?

See previous response.

Question 3: How much funding do you receive from QLD government? (past 5 years)

The Wilderness Society does not receive any recurrent funding from the Queensland Government, but it is in receipt of occasional non-recurrent grants and is part of one 'small grants' program:

Financial years 2006 to 2010 = grant of \$15,000pa (from Environmental Protection Agency / Department of Environment and Resource Management) for office administration under a grants program for environmental Non-Government Organisations. Financial year 2008/09 = \$8,383 (Gaming Community Benefit Fund) for a Cape York World Heritage Booklet. Financial year 2006/07= \$2,500 (Tourism Qld) contribution to Cape York Tourism Map. Financial year 2007/08 = \$5,000 (Tourism Qld) distribution Cape York tourism Map. Financial year 2005/06 = \$22,041 (Gaming Community Benefit Fund) for Cape York World Heritage Community Awareness Travel Trip.

The Cape York Tenure Resolution Implementation Group (CYTRIG) forum oversees the land acquisitions and tenure resolution process on Cape York for the dual purposes of returning homelands to Traditional Owners and conservation outcomes. Financial assistance from the Department of Environment and Resource Management is provided to all of the non-government members of CYTRIG including the Indigenous (Cape York Land Council and Balkanu) and conservation (Australian Conservation Foundation and Wilderness Society) representatives, for participation in that forum and preparatory work, including research on natural values. However, the Wilderness Society does not directly receive nor administer any of these funds.

Question 4: How much funding do you provide to all the Corporations in Cape York Peninsula? – could I have a breakdown for past 5 years?

The Wilderness Society does not provide 'funding' as such to any Corporations on Cape York Peninsula, let alone to "all" of them. There have been two grants provided under the National *WildCountry* Small Grant program run jointly by The Wilderness Society and the Dara Foundation which were provided to organisations on Cape York.

In 2009, Wik Projects received a one-off grant of \$10,000 (application made in conjunction with Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation) as part of community consultation work they were conducting, and Nyacha Kumapintha Aboriginal Corporation received a grant of \$5,000 connected to an economic development initiative it was working on. This information is publicly available on our website: <http://www.wilderness.org.au/articles/wildcountry-small-grants-program-major-donor-support>

Several years ago, the Northern Australia Environment Alliance, made up of a number of environmental organisations (national, Qld, WA, NT and regional) including the Wilderness Society, provided a small grant (est. \$3-5,000) to Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation. However, the Wilderness Society itself did not provide this grant.

END.