

Submission

1 March 2011

“Inquiry into Indigenous economic development in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010”

Sir

My Council was and still is, opposed to the Wild Rivers Legislation – seeing it as an unnecessary and politically motivated “green appeasement” agenda.

Any Development Application to Local Government in Cape York has to address 80 different codes and pieces of legislation before being assessed by external referral and concurrence agencies like DERM, DIP & DEEDI.

We feel there was already more than adequate environmental protective measures, rules and sentiment in place prior to this legislation and that the Wild Rivers did little extra but to:

*confuse and complicate development projects and applications

*limit the area on the Cape available to possible sustainable development.

*discourage potential investors and business proponents

*minimise the business and development options available to landowners and residents, both indigenous and non indigenous.

The application and ideology is hypercritical in that

- the “pristine and fragile” riparian environment of most of the nominated rivers is subject to seasonal “clean out” by monsoonal rain & flooding.
- the proposed PNG gas pipeline was going to cross & go through over 300 Cape creeks, rivers and waterways.
- Current National Park and Wild River management programs are largely under resourced, unsustainable and unsuccessful.
- the public hysteria and political imperative surrounding fresh water as a preeminent value commodity into the future, will see the legislation ultimately revoked and be replaced by a realistic regime of sustainable water usage.

The irresistible human momentum of population growth, decentralisation, regional development and food/water security sees the social benefits of this legislation as minimal.

A theoretical increase in the Cape tourism economy cannot stand up against the need and opportunity for diversity of industry and business and a focus on sustainable use of our natural assets to support the growing population of Cape York and the Far North.

I cite the failed Billy’s Lagoon (Napranum) project as a key example wherein that Indigenous community stood to establish sustainable employment, economy and social self determination while responsibly administering their traditional lands. The project was annulled due to Wild River restrictions.

The Regional Organisation of Councils Cape York (ROCCY) of which I am deputy Chair, also opposes this legislation for like reasons and has previously made submissions to that end.

Peter Scott
Mayor
Cook Shire Council