

Mr J.M. & Mrs J. Peat  
1st March 2006

The Secretary  
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts  
References Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas.

Tamborine Mountain in the Gold Coast Hinterland is an extremely popular destination for national and international tourists and day-trippers from Brisbane and the Gold Coast. There are a number of small National Park areas which are individually named sections of the Tamborine National Park area. The area is administered from the Gold Coast at least 30mins drive away.

Until a few years ago, there was a resident Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service ranger who oversaw three parks staff. The ranger was actively involved in many local community activities supporting the conservation and protection of, and education about, the flora and fauna of the area. There was an office on Tamborine Mountain to which residents could refer issues of interest or concern, with the resultant responses increasing the overall knowledge within the community.

With insufficient effort going into managing and protecting the National Park areas and an apparent lack of advocacy by QPWS staff for natural areas not under their control the quality of the flora is deteriorating. Weeds are invading parks areas and not being controlled. They are also proliferating along roadsides and in Council reserves and on private properties without enough active management to keep them under control.

The state of the fauna is largely unknown because there is insufficient time spent in monitoring it. Wide variations in factors such as temperature and rainfall in the seasons year by year mean that there is the potential for sudden changes in the balances within the environment and, without careful monitoring, losses may escalate unobserved.

A new, potential threat to National Park areas is commercial tourism. The Queensland State Government is looking to establish "sustainable" visitation levels with some varying percentages given over to commercial operators who are to pay for the right to conduct tourist parties to popular sites such as glow worm habitats. Whilst it may be possible to establish sustainable visitation levels, if the methodology errs on the side of overuse the damage may well be done before its effects are (i) noted and (ii) acted upon.

The National Park areas here are so small that they often have a high ratio of perimeter to area. They are therefore highly subject to the influences of adjoining uses such as roads, domestic gardens etc. Their fragmentation also

means that it is difficult for wildlife to establish corridors to pass safely from one area to another. This is recognised by residents who are working voluntarily in organisations such as Tamborine Mountain Landcare to preserve and enhance vegetated areas on Tamborine Mountain but they are not permitted to work in National Parks.

Our National Parks and natural areas are very significant to the environment and the overall sense of well being of the community and it is vital that they be well resourced and well managed to enable them to exist in a state of integrity into the future.

Yours faithfully,

James Michael Peat & Jennifer Peat