

I am submitting the following comments regarding the senate inquiry into protected areas on behalf of Far North Queensland Wildlife Rescue Association, Inc., and Australian Animals Care and Education, Inc.

We believe that the present state of National Parks in Queensland is highly unsatisfactory, in particular:

- The management of feral weeds and pests is minimal if not non-existent in a great majority of the parks
- The de-staffing of our parks has proven to be highly detrimental
- The lack of resources available to existing staff is making community outreach programs impossible to carry out
- Most if not all populations of endangered species in Queensland's national parks are steadily diminishing in numbers, in some cases critically (i.e. Cassowary, Mahogany Glider, Bridled Nailtail Wallaby, Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat, etc.). This is primarily due to:
 - Bad management
 - Insufficient, if any, weed or pest control
 - De-staffing
 - Inappropriate fire regimes

Our natural environment enhances our national budget by BILLIONS of dollars each year. It is evident that the real economic value of Protected Areas is not appreciated as traditional economic methods applied by Treasury departments do not put appropriate dollar values on ecological processes and ecosystem system services.

Australian biodiversity is in drastic decline indicating that the present strategies are not effective. The lack of cohesion between the Australia's National Parks systems is not beneficial to protected areas. We need to design and implement a conservation model for the entire nation that will cover millions of hectares of which protected areas will be a major component.

We strongly believe that independent environmental/conservation organisations should be given a much stronger role in managing protected areas. After all, they have a vested interest in managing and maintaining them effectively. They are also capable of carrying out effective community education programs and encouraging participation

We recommend that funding be directed to non-government organisations that are in a position to get independent funding (that the government is then strongly encouraged to match). NGOs are much more likely to become self-sustaining than the existing government organisations. With seed funding by the state and/or government many environmental/conservation orgs will be willing to take on a management role in protected areas to reverse the present appallingly negative trend.

Sincerely,

Lee K Curtis

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Lee K. Curtis

Administrator and Fundraiser for Project Kial, an Australian Animals Care and Education, Inc. Bridled Nailtail Wallaby Recovery Project
FNQ Wildlife Rescue, Promotions and fundraising