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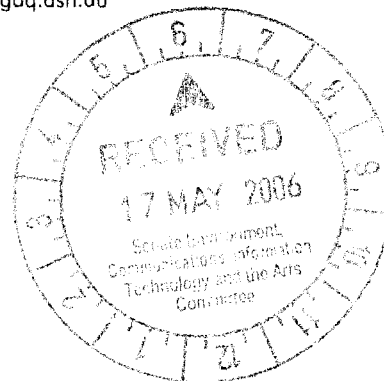
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15 May 2006

Dr Jacqueline Dewar  
Secretary  
Senate Environment Communications  
Information Technology and the Arts Reference Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA QLD 2600



Dear Dr Dewar

**Inquiry into Australia's National Parks, Conservation Reserves And Marine Protected Areas**

Please find attached the LGAQ submission, parts of which were tabled at the Inquiry into Australia's National Parks, Conservation Reserves and Marine Protected Areas on the 21 April 2006.

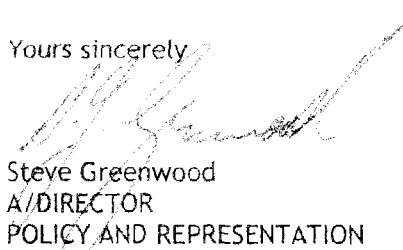
The development of the LGAQ submission involved feedback from 11 Councils that had responded to the LGAQ National Parks Inquiry in 2000. Interestingly, 10 of the 11 Councils indicated that there has been no noticeable improvement in the management and administration of Queensland National Parks since the LGAQ Inquiry in 2000. This is despite the State governments' introduction of the \$38 million four year 'Better parks' program, providing \$11 million for capital works and improved systems in National Parks in 2002-2001 and an extra \$30 million to employ up to 140 new park rangers.

The LGAQ submission is a collation of the key issues identified by Councils in response to the following management issues highlighted in the LGAQ National Parks Inquiry:

- inadequate resourcing to adequately manage, contain and/or eradicate pest plants and animals within National Parks;
- inadequate resourcing to adequately maintain park assets e.g. board walks, walking tracks and camping facilities; and
- lack of adequate consultation with affected local governments when conducting Statements of Significance and land use studies, excising areas of National Parks, arbitrary resumptions and road closures.

Thank you for the opportunity to make an additional submission.

Yours sincerely

  
Steve Greenwood  
A/DIRECTOR  
POLICY AND REPRESENTATION

mp:km  
attach



## **LGAQ Submission - Senate Inquiry into Australia's National Parks, Conservation Reserves And Marine Protected Areas**

The LGAQ submission is a collation of the key issues identified by Councils in response to the following management issues highlighted in the LGAQ National Parks Inquiry:

- inadequate resourcing to adequately manage, contain and/or eradicate pest plants and animals within National Parks;
- inadequate resourcing to adequately maintain park assets e.g. board walks, walking tracks and camping facilities; and
- lack of adequate consultation with affected local governments when conducting Statements of Significance and land use studies, excising areas of National Parks, arbitrary resumptions and road closures.

Key issues identified by Councils outlined below:

Barcoo Shire Council - Mayor Cr Bruce Scott Letter to the Minister for Environment (20<sup>th</sup> October 2005)

### **Inadequate staffing particularly in remote National Parks**

- *There were a significant number of positions either vacant or being filled by a member of staff acting in the role within both the Cooper and Diamantina catchments as well as senior management;*
- *It has been reported that temporary Staff are not being issued with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE). For example it is mandatory for all staff to be issued with a ration pack, an EPIRB and measured to fit items such as fire uniform, hat, boots and overalls, etc; but temporary staff are not receiving them due to being employed on a temporary basis;*
- *As chairman of the Barcoo Shire Counter Disaster Committee and charged with the job of mitigating against or avoiding possible dangerous situations such as flood, fire, major accident and search and rescue, I need to be assured in the knowledge that someone is at least providing a sign in and sign out register of park visitors. If this is done emergency services will be able to account for all people under their jurisdiction in the event of one of the above emergencies happening. Earlier this year such an emergency occurred when a number of park visitors were stranded due to wet weather at Welford and Diamantina Lakes National Parks. A disastrous situation in isolated locations was avoided through good luck rather than good management;*

### Mirani Shire Council

- *Severe under resourcing of suitable personnel, particularly where hard physical labour is concerned e.g. current staff unable to move/empty wheelie bin of waste.*

**Insufficient resourcing to adequately maintain park assets e.g. board walks, walking tracks and camping facilities**

### Barcoo Shire Council

- *I am troubled when I hear the comments of the travelling public regarding their disappointment in both the lack of the presence of rangers on National Parks and the poor condition of the facilities like homesteads, tracks and signage. I have*



*witnessed first hand the disgraceful state of the heritage listed homestead and gardens on Welford National Park. This was once a beautiful and well recognised local icon.*

#### Banana Shire Council

- *QPWS appear to be under-financed to undertake adequate management or control work on national park land (comment was made at a CPMG. meeting in 2005 by a QPWS officer that they were unable to do anything as they were rationing fuel between vehicles)*
- *Concerns have been raised with Council in relation to the management of the Mt Scoria recreation area near Thangool. There is a concern that lack of regular maintenance of toilet facilities is affecting tourism to the area and therefore the local Thangool economy. In addition to concerns about impacts on tourism, the necessity for Council staff to receive, address and redirect such complaints is time consuming - many ratepayers are not satisfied with being redirected to another agency and demand much greater levels of attention and action by Council.*

#### Maroochy Shire Council

- *The general management of protected areas in Maroochy Shire will become a greater problem, when the final transition of the forest reserves to protected area tenures occurs. Some of these former State Forest areas are in a degraded condition and increased resources will be required to ensure facilities are adequately maintained and that the public is aware of what activities can not be allowed in the areas under new protected area management arrangements and the enforcement of new provisions is perceived to be a challenge.*

#### Belyando Shire Council

- *The only issue is some members of the Gold Fossicking committee sometimes have problems with the maintenance of some of the roads, fencing and signs of the general permission areas for fossicking.*

**Lack of adequate consultation with affected local governments when conducting statements of significance and land use studies, excising areas of national parks, arbitrary resumptions and road closures.**

#### CEO Cook Shire

- *Generally the State does not 'consult' with Local Government; it meets its legal obligations.*
- *There is no 'consultation' at the 'do we really need this for national park' stage.*

**Inadequate resourcing to adequately manage, contain and/or eradicate pest plants and animals within national parks.**

#### Maroochy Shire Council

- *There is an inadequate level of resourcing for pest management in protected areas. Under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, National Parks are recognised as Environmentally Significant Areas that are required to be*



kept free of Class 1, 2 and 3 weeds. It is apparent that in many cases the inadequate level of funding is leading to lack of eradication and management of pest plant and animal disturbances in National Parks (or areas such as Mapleton Forest Reserve). This is a significant problem for Council, as Council's adjoining conservation land is often impacted by pest invasions. This issue generated significant discussion during the public consultation conducted in late 2005 on the Maroochy Pest Management Plan.

#### CEO Cook Shire Council

- Generally there is a large degree of issues with pest management on the National Park estate and a lot more needs to be done. The Park estate also should not be exempted from obligations under any State Legislation guiding the development of Pest Management plans and or strategies.

#### Banana Shire Council

- Control of pest plants (mainly Rubber vine, Lantana, and Mother of Millions and others) and pest animals (wild dogs, pigs and rabbits) is inadequate, impacting on adjacent land, and therefore control methods employed by landholders and Council and costs involved in such control.
- Lack of liaison with Council staff on work being carried out within National Parks. The spread of declared pests aren't affected by property boundaries, and therefore liaison is necessary for effective Shire and region-wide control.

#### Calliope Shire Council

- Council considers that the QPWS Managers are under funded for the land management activities they should be undertaking in this region. By way of example in Calliope Shire in State Forest 53 on Bindawalla Road Calliope, there is a section of creek that has heavy infestations of Parthenium Weed which should be monitored and sprayed on a regular basis, but infestations only get treated once or twice a year at best, generally in response to complaints from adjoining and downstream landholders. The local Manager has advised that the Service does not have the funding to do the necessary monitoring and treatment works. This year he has advised that he has applied for extra funding, but is not sure if his request will be granted. The downstream private property owners are financially affected as whenever the creek runs and the native fauna movements carry seed from these infestations to their property costing them considerable time and money for control work on their land. There are significant tracts of State land that have infestations of declared weeds such as Giant Rats Tail Grass, Rubber vine, Lantana, Groundsel Bush, etc. and the State does not appear to have any regular management programs in place to carry out monitoring and treatment of infestations. The surrounding and downstream property owners and Council consider the State is not doing enough in the area of noxious weed control.
- Declared animal control is also another issue. The large tracts of National Park are often a haven for wild dogs and pigs and generally the QPWS will not carry out baiting programs. Council conducts periodic co-ordinated baiting programs, but participants must fund the cost of purchasing meat for baits. I think at times this is a factor in the Service not participating in programs. Although more recently, the



*QPWS has got involved in some campaigns, but they certainly are not proactive in monitoring and controlling declared pests animals without external prompting.*

- Local landowners have also expressed concern that areas of National Park, particularly in the Kroombit Tops area, are overrun with the declared pest, lantana which is a significant concern for them as lantana, in addition to being a declared weed is also a source of fuel for bush fires. Lantana can make access for controlling fires very difficult. Some landowners adjoining State National Parks have in the past been burnt out from fires started in state forest areas and would like to see better bush fire management programs and resources in place.*
- The Boyne Valley Catchments' Working Group (a local group of landholders who work together on land management issues/projects) in Calliope Shire posed the question that "With all this land being converted to National Parks, etc, is the Government going to make sufficient funding available to properly manage the land in the areas of weed control, declared animal control and bush fire prevention and control?" This is a very valid question and something that Council would be keen to see a response to, as currently, Council considers the State significantly under funds these activities.*
- Generally the local QPWS Managers are trying to do as much as they can with what resources they have available, but the Government clearly needs to review its commitment to proper land management of State controlled lands.*

#### Burnett Shire Council

- Biggest concern for council is mosquito and pest management e.g. wild pigs in National Parks*

#### Other general issues:

#### Maroochy Shire Council

- Council believes that the EPA needs to take a greater role in commenting on/assessing development applications that have an impact on protected areas. Examples include Mooloolah River National Park that receives stormwater from the surrounding and increasing level of residential development in Sippy Downs. This stormwater impacts upon the sensitive acidic environment of the heathland ecosystems in the national park. Other examples include incremental expansion of the Shire's rural settlements that may impact upon the protected area network.*
- Funding for education about the values of protected areas needs to be greatly increased.*

#### Eacham Shire Council

- Following cyclone Larry QPWS are advising Councils that it may be two years before Misty Mountains tracks are opened again.*