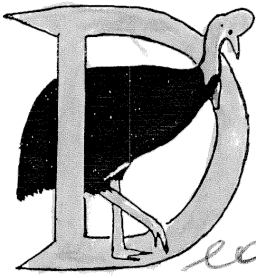


The Senate Environment, Post Office Box 29
Communications, Cardwell Q4849
Information Technology
& the Arts References
Committee
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Senate References Committee
re the funding & resources available to
meet the objectives of Australia's national
parks, other conservation reserves & marine
protected areas...

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I apologise for the lateness of these comments as I was not aware of the inquiry until after the original closure date & since then have been affected by the cyclone.

One of the objectives of national parks is better expressed than I could by Nigel Drury, as published in The Wilderness Society Newsletter of March 1991:

"If we are going to succeed in preserving the greatness of the national parks, they must be held inviolate. They represent the last stand of the primitive... If we are going to whittle away at them, we should recognize, at the very beginning, that all such whittlings are cumulative & that the end result will be mediocrity. Greatness will be gone."

While an increase in funding of the Queensland Environment department is needed, it is important that this does not mean more staff in big central offices & less staff in the field.

It is vital that more areas be declared national parks & that staff are retained in & restored to remote parks. Thus staff become part of those communities, helping each other in troubled times - fire, flood & other challenges - as well as generating an intangible but priceless quality - goodwill.

When abandoned, residences, sheds, fencing & other infrastructure deteriorate, which as well, need invasion & feral animal damage increase. Flying squads do not have the local knowledge, interest, responsibility & motivation that resident rangers have.

The argument is often made that existing national parks are not adequately administered & so no more areas should be acquired. Increased funding should mean more fair land acquisition of critical habitat & examples of surviving ecosystems while these are still intact & before they are lost forever, & we are only left with regrets. And importantly funding be used for staff to care for these areas.

3.

wonderful work is being done by altruistic, generous people in organisations such as Australian Bush Heritage Fund, Wildlife Land Fund in purchasing & caring for natural areas of importance.

However relinquishing responsibility for national parks & reserves must never be considered by government. In fact the national park estate must be increased to ensure the survival & wellbeing of threatened & endangered species in their habitats - cassowaries, bilbies, mahogany gliders, beach stone curlews, dugongs & all the other beleaguered species in desperate need of help & protection.

For government speaks for all the people, including future people, & has the prime responsibility ^{with} the ability & capacity through its legislation, & with its taxes which are dispersed for the long term benefit of the whole community.

There have been frequent "restructures" of the Queensland Environment department & these "restructures" cause confusion for staff as well as for the bemused general public, including myself.

The department has grown larger & top heavy with more staff in big office buildings & with technology replacing much of the field work & human contact.

I have seen young people enter the park service, enthusiastic, altruistic, & I have seen the light go out in them.

I hope to see the time when the very last "restructure" will mean that staff wake each morning, looking forward to a day of satisfying, useful work for the wild life & wild places in their care.

For the care of the natural environment is the most pressing need of the nation, & nothing is more important than the biodiversity that sustains the planet.

Margaret Thorsborne

(MARGARET THORSBORNE)