



28/02/06

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

**Committee Secretary,  
Senate Environment, Communications,  
Information Technology and the Arts.**

Dear Sir,

Please find attached a brief list of points in reference to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) John Ridd  
Secretary JES.

Submission by points:

Being a long standing conservation group that is based in North Queensland, our comments are primarily focussed on the Parks et al in that State.

(a) National Parks should be managed according to the Cardinal Principles:

(1) *Protect and present the areas cultural and natural resources and their values,*

(2) *Ensure that the only use of the area is nature-based and ecologically sustainable.*

We assert that any actions that will or might put at risk the *ecologically sustainable* part of that Principle must not be permitted irrespective of whether such actions are desirable for other non environmental reasons.

- (a) National Parks are costly to maintain. We therefore state that this Society has long held to the view that there should be a system of payment for entry into the parks in Queensland. We know that such is the practice in other States. We do not see such payments as being an unreasonable charge, especially for the annual passes that exist in other States. The caveat that must be added is that the monies raised in that way must be added to existing expenditure on the park system, not just be yet another thing that disappears into Consolidated Revenue.
- (b) Queensland has a good record of creating National Parks, but a poor record of maintaining them. Self evidently this point is inter-connected to the previous point.
- (c) This Society contends that feral animals and plants are the biggest environmental problem of all. Control of weeds in particular is vital. As a consequence of the poor funding levels provided for maintenance in the Parks weed control is woefully poor. It should be noted that in the Tropical areas weeds spread with astonishing rapidity. Currently the situation is getting worse because further weed species keep on being introduced. So far as fauna is concerned the major issue is pigs.
- (d) The transfer of former State Forests to the National Park system, though very desirable in the long run amplifies the problems of poor financial support for maintenance.
- (e) Aboriginal peoples are allowed to hunt and gather in National Parks. We think that no people should be allowed to. See point (a) above. The complexity of the situation is compounded by the fact that there are many groups in the Wet Tropics alone – dozens – each of whom have differing aspirations for the ‘use’ of National Parks for a variety of purposes – some of which may be, or are, contrary to environmental sustainability.
- (f) Short term funding is often too rigid. The imposition of the rule that funds must be expended by such and such a date is counter productive. In this climate there is a high degree of ‘taking the opportunity’. For example it is not possible to obtain seeds except when the trees have them(!). It is foolish to plant trees unless the weather is suitable, etc. More flexibility required.

*J. C. H. 2/10/00*