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25 June 2014

The Research Director
State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
sdiic@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee consideration of the State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

I write on behalf of North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) regarding the above Inquiry, and wish the following to be accepted as a formal submission.

NQCC opposes the sections of the *State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* (the Bill) at least to the extent that it seeks to repeal the *Wild Rivers Act 2005*.

Queensland's environment is magnificent, unique and rich in biodiversity. It contains waterways that are, in global terms, close to pristine. The need for strong state legislation protecting wild rivers in Queensland was broadly recognised and accepted more than a decade ago. The *Wild Rivers Act 2005* was passed with full support of the Queensland Parliament.

Our opposition is based on the fact that no case for the amendment of the Act and the resulting loss of protection has been successfully made. The Productivity Commission's Major Projects Development Assessment Inquiry did not demonstrate strong links between alleged delays and protective legislation. Please find attached, and accept as part of this submission, NQCC's submission to the Major Projects Development Assessment Inquiry.

In relation to the current proposal (the focus of this submission), the alternatives proposed are weak, complex and lack transparency. The proposed amendments have not been given wide public exposure, despite being a matter of high public concern.

The *Wild Rivers Act 2005*, and its associated Wild River Declarations, have sought to protect the ecological values and ensured that new destructive development such as mining, dams and intensive irrigated agriculture has been prohibited in the most sensitive parts of the respective river systems, while allowing a wide range of economic, cultural, social and recreational activities and uses. Rights under the Native Title Act were protected, and a number of commercial enterprises, including Indigenous-run ones, have operated in Wild River areas unhindered.

The alternative 'Strategic Environmental Area' (SEA) approach to rivers protection in Queensland being put forward by the government is too weak in its approach to restricting mining and other destructive development in sensitive river areas, and loses the capacity under Wild Rivers to ensure comprehensive management of whole river systems.

Critically, the proposed SEA alternatives to Wild Rivers are open to arbitrary amendment and lack the transparency and precision that Wild River Declarations have provided in terms of geographic boundaries. Parliament should retain the capacity to scrutinise Ministerially-endorsed mapped areas purporting to protect rivers.

NQCC's asks the Committee to recommend against the proposed repeal of the *Wild Rivers Act 1995*, as proposed in the Bill under examination.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Tubman', written in a cursive style.

Wendy Tubman
Coordinator