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The Research Director
Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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9 October 2014

**Re: Submission to the Water Reform and Other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2014**

Dear Sir or Madam,

North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) welcomes the opportunity to submit the following comments regarding the abovementioned Bill, which is currently before the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee.

NQCC is a regional conservation council based in Townsville and covering the area from Bowen to Cardwell and from the Reef to the NT border.

Fundamentally, NQCC, on behalf of its members and supporters and as a voice for the environment, supports the submission of WWF.

As a conservation council in an area renowned for its limited and variable water supplies, we are concerned that any changes to the regulation and use of those supplies is based rigorously on the concept of ecologically sustainable development (ESD).

In this part of the world, inappropriate use of water can have catastrophic consequences. Unless a cautious approach to water consumption is adopted, we could face the collapse not only of ecosystems but also of local and regional economies. North Queensland cannot go down the track of the Murray-Darling system, where overuse has resulted in long, expensive and difficult management issues.

NQCC strongly argues for the retention of the principal of ESD in the Water Act; a move that would ensure continued compliance with national and international commitments.

Based in Townsville, the home of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, NQCC is also concerned that any changes to the legislation that have the potential to increase the use of water (such as the deregulation of water courses) will consequently lead to increased erosion and run-off into the GBR lagoon. This would, of course, lead to further degradation of water quality and worsen the already poor and declining condition of the Reef in this region.

Australia is, as we are all well aware, the driest inhabited continent in the world. To treat water consumption without the greatest allegiance to the precautionary principle and without the strongest incentives to use water only for the best *long-term* purposes, measured in financial *and non-financial* terms, would be criminal.

Finally, NQCC is concerned that consultation in the development of this proposed legislative change has only occurred with industry groups, especially heavy, relatively short-term users of water. NQCC would like to see considerably more science behind the proposal, so that it and the broader community could be assured that the changes are wise, considered and based on the best available scientific knowledge. Furthermore, scientific input into the process should continue, so that the impact of any changes can be objectively and transparently monitored and behaviour adapted appropriately.

We are dealing here with another major Australia icon , the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). This cannot be allowed to become a controversial use, equivalent to that of the Great Barrier Reef – purely in order to assist short-term economic gain for a few. Dust bowls around the world attest to the possibly well-intentioned but misguided use of water.

We play with the GAB at the risk of reaping the grapes of wrath.

Yours faithfully,



Wendy Tubman
Coordinator