

# **NORTH QUEENSLAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**26/11/2018**

### **Community shows objection to National Park privatisation at today's Ecotourism Conference in Townsville**

The Queensland Government last month indicated they would proceed to open up National Parks to privatisation and will be pushing the idea at today's Global Eco Asia-Pacific Tourism Conference, in Townsville at Rydges from November 26 to 28.

Protestors include members and supporters from the North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) along with other members of the community who are demonstrating their outrage at the idea of the Queensland Government granting of private leases within National Parks.

"The Queensland Government has been talking about ecotourism for a decade and conservation groups have been telling them for just as long that tourism infrastructure belongs outside of National Parks", said NQCC's Community Campaigner, Crystal Falknau.

"The first priority of the Department of Environment and Science is to uphold the protection of Queensland's National Parks for the primary purpose of protecting nature on behalf of all Queenslanders.

"Hinchinbrook Island National Parks provides visitors with a most extraordinary wilderness experience because the primary purpose is for the conservation of the Island's natural values with visitation access being secondary. That is why hikers seek out this immersion in nature within a National Park and World Heritage Area that is maintained to one of the highest standards.

"The Queensland Government needs to respect our National Parks as much as the community does and acknowledge that there are already businesses providing nature-based tourism within the existing National Parks permit systems."

The Queensland Government first released their 'Expressions of Interest' process (EOI) last month for tourism infrastructure to be built within National Parks that would be given to private companies in the form of leases (up to 60 years). The EOI process was proposed for three National Parks that are also World Heritage Areas: Thorsborne Trail on Hinchinbrook Island, Cooloola Great Walk in the Great Sandy National Park and Whitsunday Islands National Park trail.

Queensland's National Parks and World Heritage sites represent efforts to quarantine fragile ecosystems from human development. These areas are already under significant pressure and scientists recognise that Queensland has the lowest proportion of land in protected areas (around 8%) of any state or territory in Australia, well short of the international target of 17 %.

The tender process is calling for the development of accommodation pods (self-contained units), guided tours and "hardening" of the track within Hinchinbrook Island, initiated by the Queensland Government's Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games.

**Further information contact Crystal Falknau 0409 840 490**