



Objection: Cooloola Great Walk, Great Sandy National Park, QLD

03 July 2022

Hon Stirling Hinchcliffe
Minister for Tourism
tourism@ministerial.qld.gov.au

CC: Hon Meaghan Scanlon
Minister for the Environment
environment@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Ministers,

I would like formally object to the Cooloola Great Walk, Great Sandy National Park, QLD. I ask that you cease the proposed commercial development and that any commercial developments always occur outside of National parks.

National polling confirms that Australians do not want to see prime protected areas like National Parks compromised by commercial or large-scale development. Research undertaken by National Parks Australia Council, a coalition of state-based conservation groups, shows just how protective Australians are of our national parks and reserves.

Of the 1,122 Australians we surveyed, the results were unequivocal, with 91% agreeing national parks and conservation areas are critical to protect nature from resource extraction (including logging and mining), and 78% of saying they did not support any development in parks and protected areas at all. There was support for small scale projects that help people enjoy nature such as public toilets, visitor centres, and interpretation areas.

The poll was commissioned in response to the increasing trend of Federal and State governments proactively spruiking and funding development and commercial interests over nature protection in national parks.

Recent disputes over Kosciuszko National Park Special Development Precincts, the Beowa National Park Light to Light Walk in NSW, Lake Malbena in Tasmania, Warburton/Yarra Ranges National Park Bike Track in Victoria, Australian Walking Company's private, luxury accommodation in Flinders Chase National Park, South Australia, and the Wangetti trail in Queensland, which is under development, have raised community concern that Federal and State governments are undermining the integrity of national parks.

When Australians were asked why national parks and conservation areas were important to them, protection of nature, saving threatened species, and quiet enjoyment of nature topped the list.

The survey also revealed that the perceived city/country divide over nature protection isn't quite as divisive as portrayed. Regional Australians were five percentage points more likely than capital city residents to vote for their local member of parliament if they actively prioritised or advocated



national parks, demonstrating “that there is pretty much a national consensus on this, and it doesn’t matter whether you live in the country or city.” said Dr Bruce McGregor.

We need our politicians to match their actions with their communities’ attitudes and rule out inappropriate development, in favor of a clearly articulated protection vision for national parks and protected areas.

Keep It Wild agrees with '[Protect Our Parks](#)' that:

The State Government is failing to consult with the Queensland public about:

- opening up Queensland’s National Parks to private development.
- all of the details and evident impacts of the Cooloola development plan.

Private development in Cooloola National Park, and in all Qld Parks, is now possible because of legislation passed by the Newman Govt.

Before being elected the ALP promised to repeal these changes.

It has now abandoned those promises and is acting secretly, in collusion with industry lobbyists, to exploit the offending legislation.

How can the Govt. reasonably assume the right to do this?

The State Government is falsely claiming that it has consulted.

Departmental records are claiming that extensive consultation was extended to local communities in the period June1-22, 2021. This is simply not true.

- These meetings were (minimally) advertised as information sessions, not consultation events.
- They were actively managed to suppress participant enquiry and objection toward the development plan and its details.

Formally recording them as ‘consultation’ is deceptive. It indicates the manipulation driving this entire process. It is also insulting to those who attended and felt abused by its heavy-handed crown management techniques.

The site selections impose damage and risk upon significant sites and public values within the National Park.

- This impact upon Park values is being allowed to deliver commercial value to the private developer.
- These developer-chosen site selections plainly demonstrate why private development should never be allowed within our National Parks.

No public control upon expansion or operational impact

Should these site developments proceed:

- no mechanism exists for public consultation or control upon any further expansion of the scale and/or capacity of the development.
- no reliable mechanisms exist to ensure compliance with operational standards, or to ensure public transparency toward breaches of operational standards or the action taken, or not taken, to maintain compliance.

No cost or revenue schedules exist to provide even minimal account of cost/benefit return to the public interest.



However input of public money and resources would be significant.

The Poona Lake site is totally unacceptable for development of any kind:

- The loss of large trees across the proposed site would be catastrophic.
- The Govt's failure to be realistic and open about this loss is a disgrace.
- The site access road would be a vector for weeds, pathogens and erosion into the pristine Lake catchment, and would require further habitat destruction.
- Fire hazard and the impacts of fire risk and liability management are significant matters that Govt. is being either unrealistic or dishonest about.
- The overall impact upon the ecology, stability and aesthetic of this unique and fragile lake catchment is unacceptable.

The Double Island Point site is totally unacceptable for development of any kind:

- D.I. Point is the only undeveloped, essentially wild headland within the SE Qld. mainland. This unique and valuable character must be securely protected.
- The selected site affords panoramic, majestic views toward the ocean and K'gari (Fraser Is.). This would attract demand from an elite global market and generate significant pressure for expansion.
- No adequate controls exist to restrict this expansion pressure. This is demonstrated by the Government's covert, industry aligned performance within this current proposal.
- No secure means exist for preventing gradual expansion to an effective hotel scale of development upon the headland.
- Restriction of public access and amenity in the vicinity of the site is inevitable to protect private assets and the expectations of high fee clients. This is likely to be sooner rather than later.

The Noosa River site is totally unacceptable for development of any kind:

- Reports by ecology and wetland expert state this site is at high risk of incurring significant impacts. This expert advice is ignored to provide 'scenic value'
- The 500metre long site service road needlessly disturbs and degrades habitat and destroys the amenity of an existing popular walking trail.
- Client transfer via the river will require additional jetty construction along the pristine riverbank. The current facilities cannot provide reliable access. This impact is neither acknowledged nor factored.

I am an advocate of commercial operators who help people explore areas they may not have the confidence to. What I am not a fan of is governments, land managers and tourism organisations who develop ill-conceived plans, ignoring public opinion, to capitalise on the lucrative inbound tourism sector and drive us recreational hikers out.

I ask that you reconsider the **Cooloola Great Walk** and leave a legacy for future generations by protecting the few wild places that remain from commercial development for tourism profit.

Yours sincerely,

Darren Edwards



Keep It Wild Australia

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