



**Submission to Health and
Community Service Committee
Protect the Bush Alliance
13 September 2013**

Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013

The Protect the Bush Alliance (PTBA), composed of over 10,000 members, has as its principal aims:

- To advocate the protection of areas of high conservation value.
- To identify and encourage activities which improve understanding of their biodiversity and other environmental values.

Actions in which the alliance is currently engaged include:

- Conducting biodiversity surveys in areas of high conservation value.
- Collecting conservation data on priority State Forests and nature refuges to help build a case for their long-term protection.
- Examining and responding to proposed changes to environmental legislation.
- Mounting social network campaigns.

PTBA is vehemently opposed to the amendments to the most recent *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA) as it blatantly contradicts the fundamental tenets of nature conservation.

While the great majority of proposed changes in this amendment are truly objectionable, our most urgent concerns are:

- 1. Changing the Object of the Act from the *conservation of nature* to encompass *social, cultural and commercial use of protected areas*.**

The Macquarie dictionary defines nature conservation as ‘the management of the natural environment to ensure it is not destroyed in the process of development.’

The Oxford dictionary defines nature ‘conservation’ as: ‘preservation, protection, or restoration of the natural environment and of wildlife’.

It is highly doubtful that either definition includes ‘social, cultural and commercial use of protected areas’ which is, in fact, an oxymoron.

What the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bills 2013 and the Amendments to the Nature Conservation Act 1992 are setting out to do is bring about a semantic change of the term ‘conservation’ which, despite how determined and aggressive the new government is about wiping out anything and everything established by past governments, borders on the ridiculous.

Our National Parks have suffered a lack of funding for proper management for many years now allowing invasive non-native flora and fauna to flourish. By increasing the traffic through our parks and opening them up to highly inappropriate activities, the government will be responsible for causing further drastic and possibly irreversible damage.

While the concept of ecotourism appears appealing on the surface, it is in fact a very complex proposition. Although ecotourism can be a lucrative source of revenue for a protected area, it can also represent a major management problem. As with most problems, the negative impacts of tourism can only be managed effectively if they have been identified, measured and evaluated.

2. Abolishing Classes of Protected Areas

The Liberal government prides itself on making science-based decisions. The science is clear when it comes to the protection of our natural assets in protected areas: disturbance and inappropriate activities are harmful.

The proposed eradication the current protected areas labeled National Park (scientific), directly contradicts this claim. Not only does this category satisfy the IUCN category of protected area, it also performs the vital role of protecting specific threatened species such as the Bridled Nailtail Wallaby and the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat. To assimilate them into a generic all-encompassing category is highly objectionable and contrary to the government's supposed scientific mind-set.

National Park (recovery) serves a clear and necessary science-based purpose as well: to allow for designated areas of land to regenerate and restore prior to being declared National Park. The same goes for a significant number of State Forests, which were slotted to become National Parks.

The new class of 'regional parks' does not allow for sufficient protection of the natural assets which they encompassed.

Abolishment of (vii) World Heritage management area, and (viii) international agreement area is directly contradicts our current treaty obligations under EPBC Act.

3. 'Special Management Areas', in particular those declared a controlled action, is a matter for significant concern.

For a special management area (controlled action), either or both of the following (apply):

- *The manipulation of the area's natural and cultural resources to protect or restore the area's natural or cultural values;*
- *The continuation of an existing use of the area consistent with maintaining the area's natural and cultural values.*

The wording appears to allow the possibility of extending grazing in National Parks beyond December 31st 2013. Allowing cattle into protected areas has been scientifically documented as being directly responsible for:

- the loss of understorey vegetation
- the destruction of native animal habitats, shelters and nesting areas
- the rampant spread of weeds
- the serious degradation of waterways and other water sources such as wetlands, billabongs, swamps, lakes and ponds).

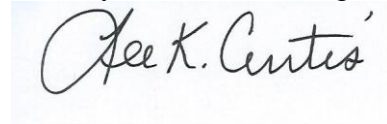
These would scientifically appear to outweigh any possible construed 'advantage' which could be ascribed to the proposed *controlled action* or *existing use* (such as the reduction of fuel loads).

Grazing is listed as a threatening process in numerous recovery plans. There is no science that shows that the impact of grazing on biodiversity is anything but detrimental to the health of our biodiversity. And why, when there is 83% of the state estate available to grazing, does the state government believe it is necessary to infringe on the paltry 4.8% of National Park that was meant to be protected in order to ensure the survival of our world class flora and fauna?

PTBA believes that *the control of threatening processes relating to threatened wildlife, including threatening processes caused by other wildlife and controlling threatening processes by manipulating the threatened wildlife's habitat* apply to **both categories** of Special Management Areas.

What this latest amendment sets out to do is turn our precious already stressed National Parks into playgrounds, a totally unacceptable and shameful endeavour which will eventually reflect very badly on the current administration.

Thank you for considering our submission.



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