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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 regarding the above Inquiry, and wish the following to be accepted as a formal submission to the Committee.

I oppose 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*. My summary reasons for this are that the Bill will lead to the removal of vital river protections that have been in place in Queensland for the past ten years, the case for such removal has not been successfully made, and the alternatives currently proposed are weak, complex and lack transparency.

Queensland is blessed to retain some of the last remaining, pristine or near pristine waterways left of the planet. 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.

The Wild Rivers Act 2005, and its associated Wild River Declarations, have sought to protect the ecological values of many of these across the State. Wild River Declarations have 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 are unaffected. 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.

The proposed SEA alternatives to Wild Rivers and the processes detailing allowable and restricted activities are also embedded in a complex web of legislation and administrative systems and processes.

Most 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.

I am unclear why the government is moving to repeal the Wild Rivers Act, when this was never foreshadowed in the last State election, nor mooted in any public policy discussions. No clear case has been made for this action. I believe that Queensland's wild rivers are too ecologically, culturally and socially important to once again be exposed to destructive development threats.

We urge the Committee to recommend against the proposed repeal of the Wild Rivers Act, as proposed in the Bill under examination.

Yours sincerely

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(Signature)