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National Parks commercialization is about money not the public interest!

North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) thinks the Queensland public need to know about the potential conflict of interest matter that raises serious questions about the Queensland Government's recent plans to open up National Parks to development.

Premier Palaszczuk herself appointed Brett Godfrey as Chair of the Queensland Government's Tourism and Events Committee. Mr Godfrey is also the Director and major shareholder of the Australian Walking Company (AWC) the company that is believed will be one of the companies shortlisted in the Government's Expression of Interest process. It was the Tourism Department who recently opened up this EOI seeking proponents to build accommodation within National Parks that will include 60-year commercial leases. Brett Godfrey is on the public record as being determined to open up National Parks across Australia to the commercial interests of his company.

"Queenslanders expect the Government to act with integrity but how can they when public money pays the Tourism and Events Committee Chair, Brett Godfrey who is also in business to get access to National Parks," asks NQCC's Campaigns Manager, Tarquin Moon.

"If you think that commercial development within National Parks is for the public good, then think again. This is about Government caving in to commercial interests," she said.

"Queensland's National Parks exist first and foremost for the preservation of nature and there is already a system where businesses can bring visitors to these special places to have the wilderness experience. These businesses and the environment are both at risk."

"People are approaching us all the time saying that they cannot believe that ALP would attempt sell off of the people's National Parks. Some of these people have been loyal ALP supporters but are now questioning this."

"I find it extraordinary how the common person sees straight through these leases of National Parks and see it as yet another asset sale," said Tarquin Moon.

NQCC does not support any activities within National Parks that threatens their primary purpose which is the preservation of biodiversity. National Parks are managed by the Queensland's Environment Department while the Tourism Department is agency running the EOIs to give 60-year leases within National Parks. NQCC believes these leases are as good as selling off National Parks because the Queensland

Government will lose control over how these areas will be managed. There are already businesses that facilitate nature experiences for visitors and this is managed through an effective permit current system.

Visitation is about bringing people to an understanding and appreciation about how important National Parks are for biodiversity conservation.

The Queensland conservation movement has always been clear that accommodation and other infrastructure belong outside of National Parks. Any proposals for infrastructure within National Parks depends on each National Park's Management Plan which details the particular values and intention of each individual case. Infrastructure within National Parks is determined by these Management Plans and the Queensland Environment Department.

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NQCC is the voice for the environment in North Queensland, campaigning as the peak non-government environmental organisation in our region since 1974. We protect the environment through advocacy and education, promote the values of the natural environment, and engage with policy and planning processes to advocate ecologically sustainable development. Our region covers the coast from Cardwell in the north, south to Bowen and west to the Northern Territory

'Tourism Queensland Chair faced perceived conflict of interest in National Park tender'
ABC News Article 3/4/19

Further Information

In October last year, the Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development (DITID) Kate Jones in partnership with Environment Minister Leeanne Enoch released an Expressions of Interest (EOI) process on Hinchinbrook Island NP (Thorsborne Trail), Whitsunday Island NP (Whitsunday Island Trail) and Great Sandy NP (Cooloola Great Walk). The EOI gives proponents opportunity to develop and operate eco-accommodation and tour guidance within the boundaries of these 3 NPs. The Government is prepared to provide the successful proponent with state-owned NP land for accommodation; exclusive ground leases for a term of up to 60 years (30 years plus one up to 30 years) to operate accommodation; assistance during the approval process; a "one-government" approach to comply with other government requirements; and a contribution of up to \$5 million for eco-accommodation built along the Whitsunday Island Trail.

Minister Kate Jones' comments about Queensland modelling commercialisation within National Parks of the Tasmanian experience <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-27/queensland-national-parks-could-be-leased-for-eco-tourism/10423998>

Tasmania's Cradle Mountain being loved to Death article

ALP while in Opposition in 2014 and LNP while in Opposition – media story about their position that leases the same as selling off that asset