

Letter to Min Lynham re Coal and a Nature Refuge are Incompatible



10 June 2016

The Honorable Dr Anthony Lynham
Level 17, QMEC Building, 61 Mary Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
Email: sdnrm@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Minister Lynham,

Below is the text of a letter [The Bimblebox Alliance Inc](#) (TBA) recently delivered to Minister Stephen Miles.

The processing of Waratah Coal's application to renew EPC 1040 in the Queensland Coal Assessment Hub in your Department in Rockhampton is naturally of great concern to TBA and its thousands of supporters.

The owners of Bimblebox were reassured by Kate Jones, in her capacity as Minister for Environment and Resource Management at a Cabinet meeting in Barcaldine in November 2009, that she would review the conflict of interest between the Queensland government's obligations under the Nature Refuge Agreement signed with the owners of Bimblebox NR and its support for the continued exploration and proposed mining of the property. This review would be undertaken upon the expiry of EPC 1040 in June 2011, Ms Jones said.

Then, in March 2012, Premier Bligh announced Labor's commitment "to review the nature refuge system with the aim of introducing new protections from mining for nature refuges with high conservation values. The Bligh Government is committed to ensuring the protection of nature refuges with high conservation values. I am advised the Commonwealth has assessed Bimblebox as having environmental values worthy of conservation as habitat. Given this assessment, I can confirm that Labor's policy would have the effect of ruling out mining in areas like the Bimblebox Nature Refuge" (see full letter [here](#)).

It is our understanding that Minister Miles is similarly committed to reclassifying Protected Areas in order to truly preserve high-conservation-value areas.

Once again, however, EPC 1040 is on the point of renewal and Bimblebox Nature Refuge is as much at risk as ever it was.

In these times of heightened concern about loss of biodiversity in Queensland; combined with your government's commitment to a substantially increased percentage of protected area in the state; and, of course, Minister Miles's and Premier Palaszczuk's climate mitigation proposals, it seems an opportune moment for DNRM and DEHP to seize the conservation initiative and exempt Bimblebox NR from mining once and for all.

As the two departments confer about the future of EPC 1040, we look to you and Minister Miles to take responsibility to ensure that Bimblebox is forever freed from EPC 1040.

I very much look forward to hearing of your intentions with regard to this matter.

With kind regards,

Paola Cassoni

Part-owner, Bimblebox Nature Refuge and President, The Bimblebox Alliance Inc

Alpha, Qld 4724

Ph 07 4985 3474

Email bimblebox@gmail.com

Letter to The Hon Minister Stephen Miles, 30 May 2016

The Honourable Dr Steven Miles MP, Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef

Level 13, 400 George Street, BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email: Mount.Coot-tha@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Minister Steven Miles,

Our organisation, The Bimblebox Alliance Inc, knows that Waratah Coal's original Exploration Permit for Coal (EPC) over Bimblebox Nature Refuge is due to expire on 21 June 2016; that the coal company lodged an application for its renewal in January of this year; and that this application is currently 'in progress' within the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) in Rockhampton.

It was only after landowners in the area formally complained to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP) about poor standards of rehabilitation following the impacts of the first round of exploration, that remediation was attended to, eight years after the drilling, well in excess of the six-month period recommended by the Environmental Authority issued with the Permit.

We have little confidence, therefore, that Waratah Coal will conduct itself according to Queensland's environmental standards during the next exploration phase, or during the lifetime of the mine, should it go ahead.

The Nature Refuge Agreement that Bimblebox's owners signed with the State Government came some years before Waratah's EPC was issued. Coal mining and the conservation role of a Nature Refuge are two obviously incompatible land uses. This predicament is exacerbated by the ever-increasing urgency of the need to transition from fossil fuels, the growing concern on the part of Queenslanders about the loss of biodiversity in their state, and the ever-greater threat posed by the impacts of climate change.

Our members and thousands of state, country and worldwide supporters tell us resource development should not occur on privately owned high-conservation-value areas such as Bimblebox Nature Refuge.

We know DEHP recognises the need for further protection of such areas from incompatible land uses, and is working towards the improvement of their classification to this end. The efficacy of conservation 'in perpetuity' is particularly important as your government strives to reach its target 17 per cent of Queensland's terrestrial area under protection, and since its own research shows the pivotal role to be played by protected areas in an increasingly climatically challenged world.

I would like to remind you of the findings of the Desert Uplands Biodiversity Planning Assessment (EPA 2005), which assessed...

'all remnant vegetation on Bimblebox NR as being of State significance... and is thus recognised as having special biodiversity values... including species known to be declining elsewhere; significant high-quality refugial faunal habitat in an area where clearing has been extensive... the vegetation of Bimblebox NR forms a significant part of a large representative tract in a highly cleared subregion (p.4).

We urge you, therefore, to shift your government's priorities away from resource development at any cost and towards your proposed Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy by exempting Bimblebox from the EPC 1040 tenement on the grounds of long-term biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. We know this is legally possible.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With kind regards,

Paola Cassoni

Part-owner, Bimblebox Nature Refuge and President, The Bimblebox Alliance Inc

Alpha, Qld 4724

Ph 07 4985 3474

Email bimblebox@gmail.com