



Coal mining and a Nature Refuge are incompatible

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

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