



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

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Ms Paola Cassoni
 President
 The Bimblebox Alliance Inc
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Paola

Dear Ms Cassoni

Thank you for your letter of 30 May 2016 concerning Bimblebox Nature Refuge.

I can assure you that the Palaszczuk Government supports an expanded and well-managed protected area estate that represents Queensland's unique flora and fauna. Private protected areas, such as nature refuges, are an increasingly important component of the protected area estate and the department will continue to work collaboratively with landholders to ensure that all nature refuges are afforded appropriate levels of protection and management.

Nature refuges are a class of protected area that, by definition, provides a lower level of protection than that afforded to national parks. Such a class of protected area has a legitimate and useful place in a robust and diverse protected area system. However, I also believe there is a need to fill a gap in the range of protected area classes, with a class that recognises areas of outstanding natural value that are privately managed to a standard equivalent to national parks, and that should be afforded a similar level of protection from incompatible land uses such as mining. Existing nature refuges may well be eligible for inclusion in such a class of protected area, where they can meet the relevant criteria for that class.

The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) is currently collaborating with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to develop options for a robust and workable mechanism to better protect privately managed land of outstanding natural value in perpetuity that will meet the needs of government and the community.

In terms of areas subject to existing permits and authorities under the current legislation, EHP tightly regulates mining activities through the issuing of environmental authorities with strict conditions under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. Any future operation of a coal mine on Bimblebox Nature Refuge would be subject to this strict regulatory framework.

I hope this information has been of assistance to you. Should you have further enquiries, please contact Mr Philip Halton, Chief of Staff in my office on (07) 3719 7330.

Yours sincerely

I've been to work with you to address land use conflicts like this. Steven

DR STEVEN MILES MP
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