



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

Cc: Hon Dr Anthony Lynham MP, Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines

Level 17, QMEC Building, 61 Mary Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email: sdnrm@ministerial.qld.gov.au

27 September 2016

Dear Steven,

Thank you for your letter of 5 July. The Bimblebox Alliance and I would be delighted to work with you towards reducing land use conflicts and ensuring the preservation of high conservation value protected areas.

During the intervening weeks I have discovered from Waratah's website that a 'Mining Lease Developmental Plan' for the company's Galilee Coal Project was approved in June 2015, and an 'Environmental Management Plan' in December last year. A draft Mining Lease Environmental Authority has yet to be certified for public notification, after which the landowners affected by this proposed mine will receive more up-to-date information about their fate.

I note the reference in your letter to the 'strict regulatory framework' within which the Queensland Government grants mining approvals, but I seek a re-examination of the appropriateness of legislation drafted nearly three decades ago for the vastly changed world we find ourselves in today. Even in the three years since the Coordinator General's Evaluation Report on the Galilee Coal Project, Australia has acquired responsibilities under the Paris Climate Conference Agreement (although unfortunately it has not yet ratified that agreement); there has been volatility in the global commodity market for coal; and the Australian public's approval of fossil fuel exploitation and tolerance of its impacts in Queensland has diminished, particularly in farming communities where groundwater supplies are at risk from extractive industries, but across the state among those with concerns about the dangers of increased coal exports through the Great Barrier Reef and the destruction of habitat generally.

Given what is widely considered by many economists to be a permanently depressed global coal market, is it not reasonable to suggest that the Coordinator General's financial assessment of Waratah's project is highly questionable and worthy of review?

I congratulate the Palaszczuk Government for initiating a community consultation to establish a new class of Private Protected Area (PPA), but I am concerned about the

implicit prioritisation in the resulting document of mining over conservation. I believe the Australian people are increasingly of the opinion that their governments should attach just as much value to the preservation of the nation's biodiversity as they do to economic development, and indeed that there should be 'no-go areas' where invasive development is forbidden under the law.

As you are aware, Bimblebox Nature Refuge (NR) provides a variety of ecological opportunities within the Desert Uplands bioregion. It exists primarily to enhance and enable several ecosystems to thrive, and to resist the panic clearing that many landowners in the region are engaged in. In the light of the failure of your Government's Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 to be passed in Parliament a couple of weeks ago, Bimblebox becomes an even more vitally important area of remnant vegetation of the eastern Desert Uplands, truly fulfilling its original mandate as a refuge.

From the point of view of the people caring for high conservation value protected areas that are not truly protected, can you imagine how utterly pointless the upkeep of the biodiversity values of a NR becomes with sword-of-Damocles mining proposals hanging over their heads? Would you keep working on a voluntary basis for the next five or ten years or more, knowing that it could all get rolled under the bulldozers?

With what feels like an ever-greater need to protect Bimblebox, as the ongoing mining approvals process trundles towards its devastating conclusion, we request your support in furthering its protection. Can you and the Minister for State Development, Natural Resources and Mines not work together to overrule the destruction of Bimblebox Nature Refuge? There are doubts about Waratah's ability to successfully finance the project *and* to get its product to market. The volatility of coal prices casts additional doubt on the project ever returning substantial revenue for the state, not to mention the inappropriateness of Queensland's fossil fuel dependency rather than a renewable energy programme. Preserving biodiversity and meeting Australia's commitments to emissions reduction targets seem like good enough reasons for a pragmatic approach to the increasingly implausible prospect of so many large mines in the Galilee Basin.

Finally, Steven, I would like to invite you to visit Bimblebox. I am sure personal experience of this unique environment and first-hand appreciation of its conservation values would help strengthen your resolve to help us save this precious place. Following recent rain, Bimblebox is looking particularly beautiful – ideal, in fact for a Spring visit.

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