

From: **Bimblebox Nature Refuge** <[bimblebox@gmail.com](mailto:bimblebox@gmail.com)>

Date: Mon, Jan 19, 2015 at 5:40 PM

Subject: Your stand on mining in protected areas please.

To:

Dear Members of Parliament and candidates,

I am co-owner of Bimblebox Nature Refuge located in the state's central west and the President of the recently formed group, The Bimblebox Alliance Inc. (<http://bimblebox.org/tba-inc/>). I am writing to ask for your stance on the mining of Nature Refuges.

Our 8,000 hectare Nature Refuge is currently threatened by Clive Palmer's China First Project (also known as Galilee Coal Project) in the Galilee Basin. This would destroy Bimblebox and the refuge it offers to endangered species like the Black-throated Finch.

The mining of Nature Refuges and other areas of high conservation value was a prominent issue prior to the 2012 election, and both major

parties promised positive outcomes for the environment. Then Premier,

Anna Bligh, committed that Bimblebox would not be mined, while Campbell Newman stated, "coal mining will not be allowed in areas of high conservation value". However, Mr Newman's assurance proved hollow, when in 2013 his government approved the China First project.

This is a wider issue than just Bimblebox. No land clearing limit exists for coal mining or CSG, and no coal mine has ever been stopped

on environmental grounds in Queensland. It appears that approval for mining and mining infrastructure is granted in every instance, despite its environmental cost. With 82% of Queensland under mining exploration, it is obvious many conservation areas are at risk.

Furthermore, only 6.8% of Queensland's total area is 'protected', of which 4.9% is in National Parks. By comparison — the national average is 9%.

Science tells us that Queensland is Australia's most biodiverse state, but we have endured a severe loss of species due to habitat degradation and destruction, feral animals and invasive weeds. National Parks alone are not enough to adequately represent all habitats and their inhabitants. Is Queensland's ever diminishing biodiversity of public concern or is it not?

Nature Refuges are privately owned and many owners absorb all expenses and do all the work in keeping these bush blocks as pristine as possible. So, Nature Refuge owners are actually de-facto managers of a public resource. We pay land rates, sacrifice our personal income by not clearing for agriculture, grazing, or subdividing into smaller allotments for real estate profits. Why would any side of politics alienate those willing to contribute their labour and other on-going associated costs, by allowing mining in these conservation areas? Their contribution has been totally disregarded and not factored into any cost benefit analyses in the development approval process.

Both the LNP and ALP create the illusion that biodiversity offsets can make up for the loss of conservation areas to activities such as mining. However, the ecological balance has been in the red for many decades. 'Remnant vegetation' is so called for good reason: it is all that remains. So when protected areas are destroyed, those ecosystems are gone. It's a net loss. Slick cartography and fancy language do no more than offset our guilt about cheating on biodiversity.

Queensland's few and far between conservation areas may have the potential to hinder our short-term economic growth, but given the decline of native species, the loss of native habitats and the risks posed by climate change, we can no longer entertain the notion of offsetting our high biodiversity areas.

There is a clear need to act to ensure Nature Refuges are not repeatedly imperilled or destroyed by mining.

In the interest of all private conservation areas, the biodiversity

they support and their custodians, I strongly urge all parties contesting the 2015 Queensland election to engage in wise, comprehensive, long-term, and systematic regional planning, based on sustainable industries that will not further destroy Australia's already degraded environments.

In practice I would like the parties and independents contesting the Queensland election to revoke all exploration permits and mining operations impacting on declared protected areas and remnant vegetation.

Conservation and coalmines cannot co-exist.

For voters in this election, could you please clearly state where you stand on the issue of mining in Queensland's conservation areas, and Nature Refuges in particular?

Thank you

Regards

Paola Cassoni,  
President, TBA Inc

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