



Hon Steve Dickson MP
Member for Buderim

Ref: CTS 14223/12



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for National Parks,
Recreation, Sport and Racing**

30 NOV 2012

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to Petition 2005-12 which was tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 31 October 2012.

The Petition requests that the House review the closures of roads and four-wheel drive tracks and trails on the State's national parks and forests, and also requests that the House re-open closed and regenerated roads and four-wheel drive tracks and trails to provide a sustainable environment for the continuation of recreational activities (for hikers, campers, anglers, bike riders, horse riders, four-wheel drivers and bush walkers). The Petition expresses concern that there has been a growing number of road and track closures.

I am pleased to re-affirm the Government's commitment to delivering improved access to national parks and forests, and greater participation in sport and recreation in Queensland, and would like to re-assure the petitioners that there is currently no policy of increasing track closures on the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) managed estate.

QPWS actively promotes and maintains an extensive road network across Queensland to support the enjoyment of parks, forests and marine areas by the public. Roads, tracks and firebreaks, and beach access ways are routinely maintained to ensure continued access and enjoyment by the public for motorised and non-motorised access.

Roads and tracks are also maintained to ensure access for industry, including commercial tour operators, timber harvesting operations, graziers, beekeepers, utilities industries and resource companies.

The Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing has a new website that now actively promotes a wide variety of locations across the State where people can get 'off the beaten track', and this can be accessed via the following link:
<http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/experiences/index.html>.

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Officers from my department have advised that roads and tracks are generally only closed or restricted for significant management issues, for example, where assessment indicates that traffic across a stream in a national park may damage the habitat of a rare or threatened species; where there is a flood, fire, landslip or other public safety risk; or where there are nuisance concerns such as park neighbours complaining about trail-bike noise near urban areas.

In many cases, these closures are only temporary to allow the QPWS to attend to urgent repairs caused by storm events, flooding or wildfires.

Some tracks are gated, locked or signed to manage conflicting uses and allow parks and forests to support a diverse range of visitor experiences, for example, to separate unregulated four-wheel drive and motorbike activities from incompatible track uses such as horse-riding, bushwalking and mountain-biking.

On occasions, roads and trails are closed to accommodate special community activities or major events such as the Oxfam Trailwalker endurance event, which support the Government's vision of active and healthy Queenslanders.

The department has a rolling capital works program which prioritises infrastructure repair and improvements on the QPWS-managed estate. I am pleased to advise that I have tasked the department with reviewing this program to ensure that recreational access is high on the priority list for improvement works.

It is unfortunate that the 2010–11 floods and cyclones (as well as several events since then) have caused significant damage across the majority of the State, including to roads, bridges and infrastructure in virtually every local government area. The Government is investing in disaster repair and QPWS has also received National Disaster Recovery and Relief Arrangements (NDRRA) funding to get parks open and to repair its many damaged roads and fire trails.

Along with other departments, local councils and neighbouring landowners, QPWS is competing for limited contracting skills and construction resources in rebuilding damaged parks and forests infrastructure, and in some locations, particularly in north and south-east Queensland, this has impacted on the speed of reconstruction. QPWS has worked to ensure that all 162 national parks closed or partially closed by the 2010–11 floods and Cyclone Yasi are now open for business and 56% of planned restoration works are now complete; however, there are significant repair works still in the pipeline and this work is expected to continue for several years.

QPWS keeps an up to date 'park alerts' page on the department's website, which aims to keep visitors informed of the latest closures and assist in planning visits.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Rhys Turner, Chief of Staff in my office on telephone 07 3224 7477.

Yours sincerely



Steve Dickson MP

Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing