



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton



**Minister for Natural Resources
and Mines**

Ref N/05/02071 DY
CTS 03653/05

14 JUL 2005

Mr N J Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 8 June 2005 enclosing a copy of E-Petition No. 466-05 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petition draws to the attention of the House the need to ensure the Wild Rivers Bill, if passed, doesn't impinge on the basic rights of the people who live in the catchments of any proposed Wild River and requests the House to modify the Bill.

The Petition, therefore, asks that the Bill's purpose be amended to remove "or almost all" when referring to a wild rivers' natural values. Wild rivers are defined in the Government election commitment to be those with all, or almost all, of their natural values intact. The Bill aims to preserve the natural values of wild rivers. The policy allows for further appropriate development in wild rivers, so it is not intended that wild rivers be absolutely pristine. It is therefore not appropriate to remove the reference to "or almost all" in the purpose clause of the Bill. In addition, very few rivers, if any, are completely intact or pristine. It is well recognised that although many of Queensland's rivers are near natural, they are not untouched. The wild rivers policy will preserve those rivers that have all, or almost all, of their natural values intact consistent with the election commitment.

The petition requests that the continuing sustainable economic development of people who live in wild rivers catchments be achieved by wild river declarations being subordinate legislation and requiring a regulatory impact assessment. A wild river declaration process is transparent with statutory consultation required for each proposed wild river ensuring local issues can be addressed. I will receive and assess submissions prior to making a decision about whether to declare the river as wild or not. A consultation report will be publicly released outlining issues that were raised during consultation and how they were dealt with.

Level 13 Mineral House
41 George Street Brisbane Qld 4000
PO Box 456 Brisbane Albert Street
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3896 3688
Facsimile +61 7 3210 6214
Email NRM@ministerial.qld.gov.au
Website www.nrm.qld.gov.au

A wild river declaration will not impact on existing authorisations, and will only potentially effect some future developments. The Bill allows for future development to proceed in a wild river, with some restrictions on location of developments and more stringent environmental requirements in some cases. A regulatory impact statement for each potential wild river is therefore not necessary.

The petition requests local community support before a wild river is nominated for declaration. To gauge local community support for a wild river nomination requires the community to be aware of the potential impact of a declaration. A declaration proposal will provide the community with this information. The declaration proposal outlines the proposed wild river area (including the location of the proposed high preservation area), the proposed 'rules' for the wild river and the development codes which would be applied if the river were declared wild. A declaration proposal will be publicly released and submissions invited. These submissions will provide an indication as to the level of local community support for the declaration and would be made with full knowledge of the potential implications. Attempting to measure community support before the community has had an opportunity to see and understand the declaration proposal would be premature.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP