Magnetic Island Community Development Assoc
Heritage Infrastructure and Planning Group
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4 January 2013

Senate Environment and Communications Committee

EPBC Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012

This Association opposes the idea of giving Australia's states sole responsibility for protecting the environment (species and wildlife).

This devolution of the Commonwealth's' national and international environmental responsibilities to the states and territories, as proposed in April 2012 by COAG, is significant for this community. This is because of our experience on Magnetic Island of the demonstrable "development-at-any-cost" history of decision making by successive Queensland governments and the improbability that a state government will assess development proposals in the national interest as opposed to short-term economic and local political interests. In this context we are conscious that historically federal governments have had to step in to ensure protection of such locations as the Alpine National Park, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Fraser Island and the Franklin River.

This community has a vested interest in a change to state assessments on development proposals for Magnetic Island, because of the island's undeniable environmental vulnerability. As you will know, the October 2010 EPBC policy statement 5.1 Magnetic Island, Queensland Region is the only location specific EPBC policy. It identifies five matters of national environmental significance relevant to Magnetic Island (the island is home or habitat to listed threatened species and a threatened ecological community, habitat to listed migratory species, and is part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, part of the Great Barrier Reef National Heritage place, and surrounded by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park).

We do not believe that the need perceived by the COAG Business Advisory Forum to redress any delays from double-handling and duplication warrants increased risk to the vulnerable World Heritage values of a location such as Magnetic Island. In case the Australian Government does not heed the public outcry about the COAG proposal we have written to Minister Burke, copied to the Prime Minister, seeking advice how the COAG proposal would affect Magnetic Island. This is so that we have a factual basis for any further representations.

We call on your committee to support the proposed amendment to the EPBC to retain federal approval powers to ensure the federal government will continue to play its important role in protecting our land, water and wildlife for all Australians.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Hempstead AM
Hon President