



Hon Anna Bligh MP
Premier of Queensland
PO Box 15185
City East Queensland 4002

2 December 2009

Dear Premier

Re: Wenlock Wild River Protection

I have been directed by State Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to express our support for the protection of the Wenlock Wild River under the *Wild River Act 2005*.

Wildlife Queensland considers the *Wild Rivers Act 2005* a strong framework for the protection of Queensland rivers. However, it is very disappointing that since its inception a number of amendments have occurred resulting in a dilution of its environmental protection. Of particular concern are the amendments made in 2006 to accommodate mining interests. The Government must commit to no more amendments that adversely affect the strength of this world-leading legislation and no further concessions to the mining industry under the *Wild Rivers Act 2005* or the *Wild Rivers Code 2006*. Wildlife Queensland understands that there are significant mining interests in the Wenlock River Basin. If the Government is truly committed to the protection of this Australian icon it must ensure, at all costs that the Wenlock and associated rainforest springs are protected from the adverse impacts of the mining industry.

In order to protect the cultural and environmental values of the Wenlock River Wildlife Queensland encourages you use your powers as Premier to ensure the following recommendations are reflected in the final Wild River Plan:

- Extend the High Preservation Area of the Coolibah Springs Complex to include its adjoining plateau.
- Amend the Wenlock declaration proposal, the *Wild Rivers Code*, the *Water Act 2000* and the *Fisheries Act 1994* to specify that waterway barrier works are prohibited in nominated Wild Rivers.
- The proposed water reserve nominated in the declaration proposal should include water extracted by overland flow works, a volumetric limit be placed on the take of overland flow and the allowable levee bank size in the *Wild Rivers Act 2005*, (Part 6) reduced to 50m.
- Ensure water license conditions strictly adhere to local ecological conditions.
- Ensure no exemptions for Rio Tinto Alcan or any other company through the declaration.
- Remove section 17 exemption clause from the *Wild Rivers Act 2005* for special agreement acts.
- Ensure that the maximum water reserved for all users, including Rio Tinto Alcan is no more than 1% of the mean annual flow (33 000ML).

Wildlife Queensland – Wenlock Wild River Protection

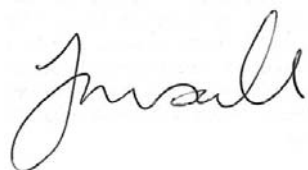
- Ensure ongoing funding is provided to the Wild River Ranger Program.
- Develop an Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management Plan for the Wenlock basin.

There is no doubt that the Wenlock River system holds immense ecological and natural values. It has the highest diversity of freshwater fish in all Australian waters. Its wetlands and estuaries provide breeding habitat to one of Queensland's largest Saltwater Crocodile populations and a spectacular array of bird life. The dense rainforest fringing the river system supports a magnificent diversity of life providing critical habitat and corridors for countless species of wildlife. The Wenlock not only provides great ecological values but also provides immense cultural value to the local Indigenous people. There are other organizations far more qualified and more appropriate to offer comment on the indigenous peoples cultural values than Wildlife Queensland. However the Traditional Owners of the Wenlock River catchment area maintain strong cultural and spiritual connections with the land and rivers. The traditional knowledge and health of these communities is in turn critical to the ongoing health of this wild river system. The Wild Rivers legislation has the potential to protect these ecological and cultural values if the Government remain focused on maintaining the integrity and strength of the legislation.

Wildlife Queensland believes that there is considerable misinformation within the community adding to the opposition to the Wild River's legislation in the Wenlock region. An educational program by an independent organization may be necessary and appropriate in order to address this. There may be need to determine concerns through independent surveys so that misunderstandings can be corrected reducing the opposition to this highly desirable program.

Wildlife Queensland and its supporters anticipate a decision from your Government that delivers the protection of the environmental and cultural values of this area. We look forward to your response so that we can inform our supporters of the care that the your Government has for the environment.

Yours Sincerely



Fiona Maxwell

Community Conservation Officer

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland