



Campaign Against Tourism Development of National Parks

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

What's been happening?

The NSW Government wants to change the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* to make it easier to build private tourism developments in national parks. Environment groups have been conducting a public campaign against the changes and negotiating in good faith with the Environment Minister Frank Sartor.

Major changes to the Bill were sought to ensure that national park legislation that currently limits new development was not weakened. We advanced negotiating principles that sought a very tight and transparent regulatory regime for limited and compatible commercial development and activities in national parks. We strongly support visitor use of national parks, and strongly oppose more development and exclusive private use.

As a result of negotiations, the draft *National Parks Amendment (Sustainable Tourism) Bill* was improved in some ways, and was introduced into Parliament by Minister Sartor as the *National Parks Amendment (Visitor and Tourist Use) Bill* on 3 June. However senior legal advice has confirmed that the revised Bill is still a major threat to the future of national parks.

Where are we at?

Minister Sartor is now seeking to push the flawed legislation through Parliament. If the Bill is passed we expect future governments, under pressure from the tourist industry, to approve thousands of new commercial leases for the exclusive private use of public national parks.

The Bill is being promoted by NPWS and the Environment Minister as a strengthening of the parks Act. But senior legal advice confirms that the changes will be 'revolutionary' and potentially undermine the multiple layers of protection that have kept national parks free from development. We are advised that the Bill removes national park protection in three important ways:

- it removes the prohibition on exclusive private use of national parks;
- it allows leases to be granted for purposes other than conservation (developments can be allowed which are not allowed in urban parks or rural land zoned for environmental protection);
- it removes objective criteria for leasing national parks and gives those powers to the Minister.

Claimed benefits of new income for national park management used to justify new commercial developments will never materialise. This is a self-serving and unsubstantiated myth perpetrated by the development lobby. As Minister Sartor

conceded in a meeting with us, the Bill will not 'materially increase the resources' available to national parks.

What happens now?

Things are moving very fast. The Bill is set for debate in the Lower House on 9 June, and may pass to the Upper House later in the week. Environment groups are united in their vigorous opposition to the Bill and we are working very hard on multiple fronts. Our media release of 8 June is attached.

How can I help?

We can defeat the Bill with a strong public outcry. Here's what you can do to help:

We have to tell them national parks are for nature, loud and clear.

Join us, together we can protect our precious national parks for nature and our kids.

Oppose laws for National Park development

Tell the NSW Government and the State Coalition you want national parks to remain public and protected, for nature and quiet enjoyment, forever. In your own words express your strong opposition to the "**National Parks and Wildlife (Visitors and Tourists) Bill, 2010**". The Bill that would if made into law facilitate commercial development, and particularly new accommodation, in national parks. *And ask a question, as questions help to ensure your letter receives a formal reply.*

E-Mail:

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The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC
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Some of the points that you and your friends could raise in your letter to the Premier and/or the Environment Minister include:

- I oppose the "Tourist Development Bill" that introduces specific tourist development provisions into the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974, including a long shopping list of facilities to allow for such things as fast food joints, supermarkets, golf courses, rifle ranges, conference centres and resorts of all sorts.

- I particularly oppose this "Tourist Development Bill" still will prevent future court appeals against bad developments in our precious National Park. Our Courts should retain the power to throw out developments, such as private universities and wedding reception centres that don't belong in our national parks.
- The Coalition Party's opposes the Part 3A planning laws as it is a Ministerial power grab, so I call on the Coalition Parties to oppose these new park laws for the same reason. I urge the Coalition to continue to oppose construction of new private accommodation facilities inside National Parks.
- There is no evidence whatsoever to support the notion that private development in national parks will boost the tourism industry or provide extra funds for park management. A stronger nature tourism industry for NSW with more people enjoying the parks is best achieved by encouraging tourism investment in nearby towns where it most benefits regional communities.
- There should be bi-partisan support to strengthen national park laws, not to weaken protection so as to facilitate commercial development. With our rapidly growing population, the integrity and protection of our parks is more important now than ever before.
- The cost of visiting National Parks should remain small, to ensure parks can be accessible to all.
- The environmental credentials of any party that supports the "Tourist Development Bill", or any aspect of it, would be permanently tainted. Please advise me of your position on this Bill.



June 8 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

Sartor's Tourism Bill Opens NSW National Parks for Business

The National Parks Association, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and The Wilderness Society Sydney today rejected changes to national parks laws introduced into Parliament by Environment Minister, Frank Sartor that will open up national parks to unrestrained tourist developments.

Environment Minister, Frank Sartor introduced the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Visitors and Tourists) Bill 2010 into Parliament last Thursday. It is set for debate in the Lower House tomorrow (Wed 9th).

NPA, NCC, BMCS and TWS reject this Bill as the opening floodgates to unsustainable tourism. These changes are dressed up by the Government as a strengthening of the National Parks Act when the opposite is true.

Advice from senior legal counsel confirms that the changes will undermine the multiple layers of protection that have until now kept national parks free from development.

The National Park budget is under severe stress to fund basic management and fund visitor infrastructure, but claimed gains from commercial tourism will not directly benefit parks. Minister Sartor has conceded that these changes will not 'materially increase the resources' available for national parks.

'While the Bill introduced to Parliament contains some improved elements compared with earlier versions presented to environment groups in April and May, it lacks the fundamental protection now offered by the National Parks and Wildlife Act' said Kevin Evans, Executive Officer of NPA.

'We have negotiated in good faith with the NSW Government but they have been unwilling to make the changes necessary to strengthen the Act. Minister Sartor is now seeking to push the flawed legislation through Parliament'

'If the Bill is passed we expect future Governments, under pressure from the tourist industry, to approve thousands of new commercial leases for the exclusive private use of public national parks.

National Park laws around the world limit tourist development. There are now attempts to wind it back where it has gone ahead, such as in Yosemite and Yellowstone.'

'The NSW Government is set to declare national parks 'open for business'. For a government that prides itself on its environmental record it has shown itself willing to sell out the national parks the community has fought so hard to protect for decades.' Said Dr Haydn Washington, Acting CEO of NCC.

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