

30<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Douglas Shire Council  
PO Box 723  
Mossman Q 4873  
[Enquires@douglas.qld.gov.au](mailto:Enquires@douglas.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Application Reference MCUI2021\_4066/1**

Our main objection to the proposed Wangetti Trail is not in relation to the design or construction of the track. Our issue is with the State government, but it is an issue that the Douglas Shire Council should be aware of as most of the Wangetti Trail is in the Douglas Shire and its existence will have lasting impacts on the local community.

In our opinion, the State government is using the Vegetation Management Act (VMA) to create a monopoly for the trail operator by stifling or stopping local businesses from developing ancillary experiences, including accommodation. It's nothing short of hypocrisy. The same State government that is allowing a developer to clear trees, doze out service roads and construct buildings in the World Heritage listed National Park, is the same State government that is preventing the owner of previously cleared freehold land to build any type of structure within 22 metres of the tree line, a tree line that was planted and nurtured by the landowner.

In 2020, we engaged RPS to develop a concept for a campground with 12 eco/glamour cabins, communal cook house, manager's residence, bike storage/maintenance shed and bush sites for tents and camper trailers. The site for the proposed campground was cleared in 1996 under a Tree Clearing Permit and the site has been regularly slashed ever since to reduce fire risk. The site was classified Category X under DNRME vegetation mapping.

Our consultants arranged a meeting with SARA to discuss the project and to ascertain if there was any mechanism under the Vegetation Management Act to allow an ecotourism development where cabins could be built close to the tree line so guests could enjoy a natural experience. SARA advised us that it would be difficult to obtain approval for the development.

Coincident or not, 3 weeks after the meeting with SARA, the proposed site was recategorized C under the DNRME vegetation mapping. The approval success rate for the development went from *difficult* to *almost impossible*. Our Town Planners advised us not to continue with our town planning application. The estimated construction cost of the proposed campground was around \$5.0M, and once completed it could have employed eight staff.

In contrast to the proposed accommodation sites on the Trail, we have existing highway access, flat usable land, low value vegetation, visual barriers, fire breaks, electricity, abundant water, and we are not in a National Park!

Council needs to apply careful consideration to what it will inherit from this State government sponsored project and its enduring ramifications for the community.

Yours sincerely

