



Hon Vicky Darling MP
Member for Sandgate

Ref: CTS 21228/11



**Queensland
Government**

Minister for Environment

20 DEC 2011

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Neil

I refer to your letter of 2 December 2011 enclosing a copy of Petition No.1791-11 and 1834-11 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly regarding the Halifax Bay Wetlands National Park.

The Halifax Bay Wetlands contain outstanding conservation values and represents an important addition to Queensland's protected area estate. The Government has had an interest in protecting the high natural values of the coastal lowlands and wetland areas of Halifax Bay for a long period of time, as demonstrated by the gazettal of the Palm Creek Conservation Park in 1994 and Halifax Bay National Park in 1999.

The Wetlands were selected on criteria which identified the area as containing outstanding environmental values including threatened flora and fauna, and the presence of Indigenous cultural heritage and nationally selected wetlands. The estuarine systems and coastal dune forests form a complex and highly productive natural ecosystem, worthy of protection in the national park estate.

I am advised the Department of Environment and Resource Management has been involved in a number of discussions with members of the community in relation to the transfer to national park, including a public meeting held in January 2011. The department is also undertaking preliminary discussions with the Hinchinbrook Shire Council regarding planning of access roads and camp sites in the area.

I can reassure you many forms of recreation and public enjoyment are able to continue unaffected by the declaration of a national park. These activities typically include, but are not limited to, bushwalking and hiking, wildlife spotting including bird watching, photography, picnicking, cycling, camping and boating.

I would like to confirm that fishing will be unaffected by the declaration of the national park. A number of different government authorities are working to ensure fishing can continue in places such as Palm Creek, Orient Creek, Cattle Creek, and Brackish Hole.

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I had the pleasure of meeting with the principal petitioner, Darren Firth, on the 14th December 2011 to discuss concerns about the area and how it is to be managed in the future. Through his leadership and the efforts of its members, the Halifax Bay Recreation and Lifestyle Association has successfully raised government awareness of what is important to many in the community. I have instructed the department to increase its consultation efforts in relation to all future decisions regarding the parks' management to ensure there is greater community involvement.

I can assure you the association will be offered a major role in this process.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Mark Gough, Manager, Planning of the department on telephone (07) 3330 5885.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicky Darling', written in a cursive style.

Vicky Darling MP
Minister for Environment