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Your Ref: 538-05

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 6 October 2005 enclosing a copy of a petition received by the House on 28 September 2005 regarding the request for tenure conversion of Mapleton Forest Reserve to conservation park, rather than national park, thus allowing continued access to dog-walkers.

During September 1999, the Queensland Government announced the conversion of 425 000 hectares of land in State forest tenure to tenures under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA), as part of the South East Queensland Forests Agreement (SEQFA).

In determining the final tenure of these areas, the Government sought to maximise the area transferred to national park tenure because of the high conservation values on most SEQFA lands.

Mapleton Forest Reserve is one of these areas with high conservation values. It contains seven regional ecosystems which have an 'of concern' conservation status. Twenty-four threatened plant species and 20 threatened fauna species listed under the NCA have been recorded within the Reserve. The conversion of the Reserve to national park tenure is consistent with its high values, and provides it with the highest level of conservation protection in accordance with the NCA.

Dogs are not permitted in either national park or national park (recovery) tenures, as the introduction of any non-native animals is inconsistent with the objectives of the NCA.

Conserving natural values and protecting habitat for native animals are primary management purposes for protected areas. The presence of dogs has considerable impact on our native animals, particularly ground dwelling mammals and reptiles. In addition, the presence of dogs can also impact on visitor experience and safety.

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The State Government's alternative horse riding trail network being investigated for the Mapleton area provides an opportunity to include other compatible recreation activities, such as dog walking, in the vicinity of Mapleton Forest Reserve. These trails could provide extensive opportunities for dog walking outside the national park tenure.

Earlier this year, officers from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service undertook inspections of dog walking opportunities adjacent to Mapleton Forest Reserve. Several alternatives outside of the future national park areas were identified as suitable for dog walking around Mapleton Forest. These included the use of road verges and easements, and along powerline easements at Delicia Road. A walkway which allows dog walking from the Mapleton township to Mapleton Falls has also been provided by local government.

Provision of options for dog walking will be addressed as part of the Mapleton alternative horse trail network. Officers from the EPA will meet with the relevant Mapleton residents to further discuss dog walking issues.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

**Desley Boyle MP**  
**Minister for Environment**  
**Minister for Local Government and Planning**  
**Minister for Women**