



Hon Desley Boyle MP
Member for Cairns



**Queensland
Government**

Minister for Environment

**Minister for Local Government
and Planning**

Minister for Women

Our Ref: BNE22618-2
BNE2006/2412
E/06/00484

Your Ref: 610-06

20 MAR 2006

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 16 February 2006 concerning the petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly No. 610-06 for the continuation of fossicking in Queensland's State forest areas.

I have received a letter from Mr Neil Roberts MP, dated 13 February 2006, which refers to the above petition. I note that only the first page of the petition tabled in the Parliament on Tuesday 14 February 2006 has been accepted and therefore only a small number of signatures in support of the Queensland Lapidary and Allied Craft Clubs Association's proposals are recorded. Mr Neil Roberts has forwarded me the remaining pages of this petition upon which there are a total of 1 982 signatures.

The transfer of State forest and timber reserves in south-east Queensland, and in the Wet Tropics, to the protected area estate has been a commitment of this Government since 1999. Already approximately 380 000 hectares in the Wet Tropics area was dedicated on 16 December 2005, predominantly as national park tenure. Additionally, it is anticipated that a further 500 000 hectares of new protected area, mainly in south east Queensland, will be dedicated under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* this year.

I have examined the 'Report into Fossicking in Queensland' commissioned by QLACCA and am aware of the importance of fossicking to Queenslanders as well as interstate visitors. However, no defined fossicking areas have been identified within the proposed lands for transfer as part of the South East Queensland Forests Agreement program, or those recently transferred to protected area as part of the Wet Tropics forest transfer.

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The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water administers the *Fossicking Act 1994*, which describes the many areas available for fossicking in Queensland. The following website: http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/mines/fossicking/designated_lands.html lists the declared fossicking areas, designated fossicking lands and general permission areas in Queensland. A number of general permission areas exist on State forest. These include Swipers Gully (part of Passchendaele State Forest SF263) and a number of selected localities on State forest or reserves in the Emerald Mining District.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

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

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