

Our Ref: BNE18935-1
NE2007/2480
E/07/00425
Your Ref: 772-07

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 8 February 2007 regarding petition 772-07 received by the House on 7 February 2007 concerning the potential impact on fossicking arising from restricted access to State forests in the Western Hardwoods Agreement areas, particularly near Clermont.

I am aware that fossicking for gold using metal detectors on General Permission Areas (GPAs) at Clermont is a major tourism activity for the town and that the town has a Gold Festival and a long gold mining history.

There are currently nine GPAs near Clermont available for fossicking. Six of these areas are located on State forest. Conversion of State forest to a protected area under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* has the potential to exclude fossicking. The *Fossicking Act 1994* does not allow fossicking on a protected area other than a resource reserve.

The State Government has not yet made a final decision on the future tenures of the State forests around Clermont. Decisions of this nature will be made as part of the broader Western Hardwoods Forest Agreement process and will take account of existing uses, such as fossicking.

I am aware of the concerns raised in the petition and acknowledge that fossickers are one of a range of interest groups that use State forests.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Lindy Nelson-Carr MP
Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism