



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Tourism Bill Passes – Green Light for Private Development in National Parks**

The Keneally Government has given the green light to developers to exploit national parks for exclusive commercial tourist developments in a Bill that passed NSW Parliament's Upper House late last night.

"Today is a sad day for the people of NSW. A sad day when the Labor Government, supported by the Coalition, passed a bill that radically erodes forever the long held protection of our unique national parks in NSW," said Kevin Evans, Executive Officer of the National Parks Association of NSW.

"The legacy of Labor Premiers Neville Wran and Bob Carr who led Australia on environment issues now lies trampled in the rush to pander to tourist developers."

"The handbrake that has kept national parks free from development has been removed," said Haydn Washington, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Visitors and Tourists) Bill 2010* will allow a broad range of buildings and activities in national parks for exclusive commercial use. Permitted now in our national parks will be new hotels, resorts, cabins and lodges and private facilities and shops for tourists, sport and recreation. The range of possibilities and the areas it can cover are unlimited.

"In the 43 years since the national park system was established, the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* has successfully prevented new buildings for private accommodation and commercial activities except for the recent expansions at Perisher-Blue ski resort," Dr Washington said.

"The Blue Mountains will now be a target for developments such as resorts and restaurants inside the National Park," said Tara Cameron, President of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

"Local towns will be bypassed when tourists are bussed from Sydney straight into a resort. It is unbelievable that the Coalition, who say they support small business, helped this to happen.

"What is particularly objectionable is that the Minister will be the one deciding what gets built.

"Tourist developers and enthusiast NPWS managers be warned. Local community groups across the State will fight tourist resort by tourist resort to keep these out of national parks and instead in local towns and on private properties where they belong," Ms Cameron said.

"Legal advice from highly respected barrister, Tim Robertson SC, warned that the proposed changes were 'revolutionary' and would overturn 20 years of case law. This case law has limited new commercial developments in national parks to inherited buildings such as Caves House and Quarantine Station and the extensive ski lodges and hotels in Kosciuszko National Park," said Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation.

"Robertson said the Bill 'destroys this delicate balance that the Courts have struck, which gives primacy to the conservation objectives of the Act.'

"Government refused to agree to amendments that would re-establish the primacy of conservation for the leasing system. Government lawyers hampered this further by refusing to draft the amendments for the Greens to move in the Upper House," Mr Muir said.

"Environment Minister, Frank Sartor, pushed through the legislation less than a week after it was introduced into Parliament in order to stifle debate and limit changes. There was literally no time for proper consultation and to resolve the complex legal issues," said Belinda Fairbrother, Campaign Coordinator of The Wilderness Society.

"Other failures of the Bill passed by Parliament include:

- Commercial tours can be conducted in wilderness for the first time
- National parks can be closed off to the public for private events for long periods.
- Leases can be issued for unlimited periods, even 100 years or more.
- Draft lease renewals will no longer be put on public exhibition (but Govt has promised to do this via policy anyway)
- Draft leases remain secret and even the Advisory Council will be denied access to 'commercial' information such as lease payments

"Sensible amendments proposed by the Greens to limit the range of purposes for tourism developments and to ensure public accountability were rejected. The Opposition supported the Greens in a failed attempt to remove Ministerial discretion in the application of the new sustainability guidelines," Ms Fairbrother said.

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