



MEDIA RELEASE

AIRPORT LAND DEAL IGNORES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The handover of State land to the Sunshine Coast Council for the airport expansion and its exemption from environmental legislation risks unacceptable environmental impacts according to the region's peak environmental advocacy group, the Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC)

The State government has amended the State Planning Regulation to exclude infrastructure on airports, and ancillary works from any development assessment referral under the *Vegetation Management Act*.

"The survival of a range of endangered and vulnerable flora and fauna such as the Emu Mountain She-Oak and the Wallum Froglet has just become even more tenuous" said SCEC spokesperson Narelle McCarthy.

Superficially seen as good news for the economy, local environment groups say this is another example of bad news for the environment because protection of highly significant vegetation has been rolled back.

"All the attention around this land handover has been on perceived economic benefits,' said Leigh Warneminda of Coolum Coast Care. "The sidelining of protection for areas important for the conservation of listed and regionally significant species is virtually ignored."

"The State Government again shows it has little regard for the environment or the consequences of its narrow economic agenda" Ms McCarthy said. "In its short tenure, it is creating a damning environmental legacy not unlike that of the Joh Bjelke-Petersen dark ages" she said. "The State government considers environmental factors irrelevant if they are seen to stand in the way of making money. This economic agenda white noise ignores the underpinning need for ecological sustainability."

The *Vegetation Management Act* was first adopted in 1999 to regulate clearing so regional ecosystems could be preserved and in many cases, recover. Applications to clear native vegetation were assessed and conditions applied if necessary to avoid certain areas or provide compensatory offsets.

"This news means endangered and threatened species we know are present on the airport site are at great risk," Ms McCarthy said. "It seems the only law now standing between endangered vegetation and bulldozers is Federal environment legislation (the *EPBC Act*) which has now been handed over to an environmentally reckless State government. So, effectively there could be zero protection for our precious threatened species."

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An Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the airport expansion is currently underway. “I have to question whether the EIS will have any teeth whatsoever if there is little or no protective legislation in place” Ms Warneminde said

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