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Minister Mick de Brenni
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Outdoor activities

Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation Incorporated (QORF) is the peak body representing the interests of the outdoor sector in Queensland. As a member-based, not-for-profit association, QORF represents and advocates on behalf of a coalition of outdoor groups and individuals.

QORF supports the restrictions on public gatherings in this time to reduce the spread of the SARS Cov 2 virus. However, QORF is extremely concerned that during the current COVID-19 health emergency, opportunities for people to go outdoors may be removed and outdoor locations will be closed to the public.

Now more than ever, Queenslanders need outdoor activities and outdoor spaces for their physical and mental health and wellbeing. As the population is coming to terms with extreme uncertainty and anxiety the focus on mental health is paramount. Multiple research studies show that being in the outdoors is beneficial to people.

We note with dismay the failure of some people in our communities to comply with some aspects of the Public Health Directions that have been issued by Queensland's Chief Health Officer.

QORF suggests that the vast majority of the population is complying with the Public Health Directions. We recognise that those irresponsible or ignorant people who fail to comply are putting the entire community at risk and making it more likely that responsible use of outdoor spaces will be detrimentally affected.

We note that the message from the Premier to the community has been for people to stay in their villages or local neighbourhoods during this time of crisis. QORF supports this approach, and we emphasise that to avoid the negative consequences of isolation within homes, it is important that outdoor spaces remain available in neighbourhoods so that people can go outdoors in responsible ways.

Land in State government control (eg National Parks, State Forest, Seqwater and SunWater managed areas) represents a significant portion of the open space in Queensland that is used for outdoor activities. Some of these areas are remote from population centres, but these areas also represent local neighbourhood assets for

nearby residents. The closure of these assets to outdoor activities could have devastating impacts on those residents.

QORF calls for a nuanced approach from government in response to the poor behavior of some people, rather than blanket closures of all outdoor spaces across Queensland. We draw a distinction between responsible outdoor activities that can be done while observing social distancing and irresponsible behavior that must be stopped.

QORF calls on the authorities to enforce the Public Health Directions, and publicise the enforcement of those directions, to ensure that the public gets the message that non-compliance has direct consequences.

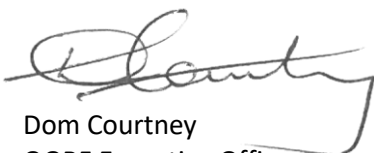
We note that there has been community education campaigning through messaging on public transport and other places. We call for an escalation of the public messaging via social and traditional media, and installation of signage at parks/beaches, including instructions for people to take action (eg call the police) if they observe non-compliance.

QORF suggests the temporary closure of supporting infrastructure, such as car parks and toilets at popular places where people may gather, without closing trails or beaches to the public. This would have the practical effect of limiting the number of people who visit those locations to those who live nearby. Local residents could still walk or cycle to the location and then return to their homes.

QORF commits to communicating with our network of responsible outdoor users regarding the consequences for non-compliance, and the need for the community to report non-compliance to the relevant authorities. We look to work further with the State government during this time of crisis and beyond to ensure that outdoor activities continue for the health of all Queenslanders.

If you have any queries, please contact me by telephone on 0419 976 800 or by email eo@qorf.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dom Courtney
QORF Executive Officer

