

Open letter to members of the South Australian Parliament

Dear Member

16 October 2011

Arkaroola Protection Bill

During the sitting week 18-20 October Premier Rann is expected to introduce a Bill to ensure the permanent protection of the extraordinary geological and environmental values of a particularly significant part of the northern Flinders Ranges. The protected area includes the core mountains of the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary and embraces too the spectacularly beautiful and rare granite terrain of the Mawson Plateau.

As caretakers of Arkaroola since 1968, we commend this Bill to your attention. We urge all members, regardless of political persuasion, to grasp this momentous occasion to realistically protect this internationally renowned mountain fastness with its unparalleled community and scientific values.

The time for debate about the desirability of protection is long past. Recent years have witnessed the widest possible support for protection from all sectors of the community.

The Government initiated protection by a proclamation issued on 29 July 2011. The Bill to come before parliament shortly adds strength to this by ensuring that, in future, both houses of parliament will need to approve any lessening of this protection.

There are some members, we understand, who consider that the present Flinders Ranges Development Plan provides adequate protection for this environment. This is not so.

- Environmental damage at Arkaroola caused in recent years during mineral exploration is widely known. The Development Act's Plan for the Flinders Ranges could not prevent that.
- The Mining Minister is not required legally to consider the Development Act or Plan when deciding to allow mineral exploration or a mine.
- Under the Development Act a government may simply declare a mining proposal to be a major development, excluding it from the provisions of this Act.

The proposed legislation will put responsibility for any future mining development in the protected area of Arkaroola where it properly belongs – requiring a joint decision of both houses of parliament.

We earnestly seek your support to protect this exceptional part of Australia's natural heritage.

Sincerely

Marg Sprigg

Douglas Sprigg

Directors, Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary