

**SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO NATIVE VEGETATION LAWS, GREENHOUSE GAS
ABATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES**

TO: Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
Committee

FROM: Marilyn Bidstrup

Background: My husband and I have been farming in the Warra district for the past 35 years. On our farms we grow a variety of crops including Chick Peas, Mung Beans, Sorghum, Cotton and Wheat. In the later years our sons have come home after university to join us in our farming operations.

Submission:

Firstly, I wish to thank the Senate committee for giving us the opportunity of responding to this inquiry.

Every landholder, who, after receiving notification to say that he will not be able to use "x" amount of his land anymore, but he must keep it clear of weeds, control the feral animals and then still be asked to pay rates for this land to be locked up – not to mention his loss of income from not being able to use his property that he has paid considerable money for, feels justifiable aggrieved.

The locked up property will become a breeding ground for wild pigs, wild dogs, feral cats – all of which are huge pests in plague proportions. Not only would it become impossible to control these feral pests it would almost exclude the property owner from growing any sort of crop or to graze any livestock next to these areas. The stress both financially and mentally must be immense.

It is the landowner who is left to carry the burden again. The assets that he thought were his will become so undervalued that in reality he will have nothing left to sell at the end of a lifetime of work of growing crops or breeding livestock to help feed the nation. No amount of compensation will ever cover this loss.

The owner of the land is the best guardian of such an asset and the right of looking after his own property is being taken away from him.

The native vegetation laws are not dissimilar to the loss of property rights of the farmers in the Surat Basin. Property owners in this region must have a licence to draw water from the underground aquifers but the Coal Seam Gas companies are allowed to draw whatever is required to release the gas – reportedly 2,000,000 megalitres in the next few years without a licence. Origin and Santos are saying they will have an impact on the upper aquifers, as does the Parsons Brinckerhoff report commissioned by the State Government.

Local companies of QGC and Arrow are claiming that their dewatering of the aquifers will not affect the upper aquifers. Put into perspective, the whole of the Condamine alluvium from around Tummaville to Warra has had extraction rates of 66,000 megalitres per annum which the State Government (and most farmers) believe is not sustainable, and this is to be cut back to 40,000 megalitres. Towns in this region use around 5,000 megalitres.

I feel that this is a very serious situation – not only will the aquifers be drained and many towns and property owners be without underground water to sustain their supply but the salt water that these companies are drawing to the surface will have the potential to have not only a serious effect of the surrounding countryside but also have a disastrous effect on the Murray Darling River system as a whole.