

Submission by Rouse Hill Heights Action Group Inc. to the Senate Enquiry on

### **Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures**

We are a Residents Action Group representing approximately 100 landowners who have small acreage properties, generally 2 hectares, in Rouse Hill, North-West Sydney, NSW.

The majority of our properties are moderately to heavily treed, mostly with Cumberland Plain Woodland.

Most of these trees are regrowth, allowed to flourish by the landowners after the area was subdivided by the Terry family from their Rouse Hill estate in the 1960's. The land then was mostly bare, as it was used as grazing land for dairy cows, and Gerald Terry cut down many trees on his property to feed a sawmill which was his sole source of income.

Therefore, the trees only exist on our properties because the landowners actively encouraged their regrowth.

However, the advent of the Native Vegetation Laws has impacted on the value of our properties. The ill-fated Green Zones Proposal of 2005 in NSW, also seriously devalued the worth of treed acreage. Most property values fell by 40%, if they could be sold at all.

One 2 hectare property in Cudgegong Road, Rouse Hill, was in the process of being sold to the adjoining Rouse Hill Anglican College when the Green Zones were announced. The college, which had agreed to pay \$3.2 million, dropped out just before contracts were exchanged because the property was heavily treed. The college then brought a cleared block adjoining the first, for \$3.2 million. The owners of the property which lost out, had purchased elsewhere, and had to sell. Because of the trees and the Green Zone, they could only get \$1.2 million.

Following the announcement of the Green Zones, many trees were felled by chainsaws and bulldozers, as owners panicked. Even now, many trees are felled or damaged by "storms". I have witnessed this for myself, and it has also been stated to me by many people throughout the northwest and southwest of Sydney whom I have contact with through the network of residents' groups brought together by protests against the Green Zones.

Peter Spencer's case has only proved to the general public that trees on acreage are a financial liability. Why would people grow, nurture or preserve trees on their property when they are financially worse off because of it? People should be rewarded for looking after the environment, not punished, and there needs to be a positive move to enable this to happen. Otherwise, trees will be removed, legally and illegally, or not allowed to grow, and our environment will suffer.

Colleen Abela,

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