

# **Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures: Submission from Robert Zonta in relation to property held jointly by Bruno, Robert, Frank and Christina Zonta.**

## **1) *The impact of native vegetation laws and legislated greenhouse gas abatement measures on landholders, including:***

### ***(a) any diminution of land asset value***

1. 170 ha (400 acres) of our land is locked up as Remnant under State Vegetation Management laws
2. Since 2000, a landowner in the district with poorer quality land (for farming) under similar restrictions was paid \$2000 per acre for his land purchased by the Federal Government.
3. Recent sales in the district for 'bush blocks' as land locked up under VM laws is called, indicate that the market price is far less than this.
4. Our land is good flood-free farming land which, as cane land would fetch far in excess of \$3000 per acre. Sales of similar land since 2004 have fetched up to \$8000 per acre.
5. Estimated loss in land asset value:  
Sale as a bush block: approx \$1000 per acre; (Total: \$400000, less subdivision costs).  
Sale as good cane land: \$6000 per acre: loss \$5000 per acre; (Total: \$24000000)

**Total loss in land asset value:  $400 \times \$5000 = \$2000000$  (\$2 million)**

It is doubtful whether the locked up land could be sold as bush blocks as the minimum size for a subdivision for land zoned for agriculture is 60 ha. The land which is locked up is in several sections across the property. Therefore to sell the conserved land would require us to include a considerable area of our good cane land in the subdivision.

### ***and productivity as a result of such laws***

1. Productivity value as locked up land: Nil (apart from minimal income from timber on the land which could be taken over 15 years)
2. Productivity value as cane land:  
400 acres producing 10,000 tonnes (25 tonne per acre) at current prices of \$500 per tonne:  $10000 \times \$500 = \$5000000$  (\$5 million)

**Total loss in productivity value: \$5 million Gross annually**

### **b) compensation arrangements to landholders resulting from the imposition of such laws;**

1. No compensation was made available despite assurances by the Federal Government prior to 2000 that compensation would be available to landowners if uncleared land was locked up.
2. From 2004 an Adjustment Package (Enterprise Assistance) was available to a maximum of \$100000 per business for landowners who could propose a project to make better use of available land without further clearing. This was only available if the land had not been previously locked up under earlier (2000) legislation.
3. We applied but were informed that we were not eligible to receive any assistance.

### ***c) the appropriateness of the method of calculation of asset value in the determination of compensation arrangements; and***

1. No determination of the asset value was made as there were no compensation arrangements made to apply to our land.
2. The assistance package which was available to some landowners was based on an Impact Assessment Study conducted in 2003 by ABARE. It was based entirely on dryland areas and was hardly applicable to Wet Tropics land.

***(d) any other related matter***

1. We have owned the land as Leasehold since 1970.
2. In 1980 at considerable expense, we converted the title from Leasehold to Freehold.
3. Rates on the area of land locked up are approximately \$4000 per annum.
4. Since 2000 we estimate we have paid \$40000 in rates on the land which we have been unable to use for farming.
5. Written contact was made by the State Member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps, on our behalf to the Federal Environment Minister (Peter Garrett), Queensland Premier (Peter Beattie) and The Wet Tropics District Manager of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services for either compensation or purchase of the land in question with no success. While Andrew Millard, District Manager noted the significant conservation values and habitat for cassowaries and mahogany glider, he concluded that the land was not high priority for acquisition.
6. A significant area of the land which is locked up adjoins (on two sides) the Edmund Kennedy National Park. Effectively it is the same as National Park, yet it is privately owned and land on which we must continue to pay rates and maintain.
7. The fundamental reason why the land cannot be cleared for farming is that it is deemed to be Essential Habitat for Mahogany Glider and Southern Cassowary, both listed as Endangered Species. This mapping was produced as a requirement of Recovery Plans produced by the EPA (Queensland). However, the production of Recovery Plans for Endangered Species is a requirement specified by the Federal Department of Environment.
8. Compensation is specified for landowners affected by Conservation Plans in the Queensland Nature Conservation Act (1992). However, the Queensland Government has neglected to ratify the relevant Recovery Plans (both in their second editions): thus avoiding compensation. Instead, the Essential Habitat mapping for Endangered Species has been provided as an overlay on the Regional Ecosystem mapping in the implementation of the Vegetation Management Act with no compensation.
9. Schemes being proposed to provide carbon credit for landowners specifically exclude land which is deemed to be Remnant.

**Submission made by Robert Zonta on Behalf of the owners of the property (Bruno Zonta, Robert Zonta, Frank Zonta and Christine Zonta.**