

19th.Feb.2010

Committee Secretary,
Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee.
P.O. Box 6100,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600.

INQUIRY INTO NATIVE VEGETATION LAWS, GREENHOUSE GAS ABATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES.

Dear Sir / Mme.,

I thank you for the opportunity to have input and submit the following:

We are horticulturalists and have made a living from the production of cut flowers for Australian and export markets for the past 33 years.

Our main export has been from cultivated West Australian native varieties selected, bred and propagated by us.

In 1987 we purchased a 190 ha., mostly cleared rural property. The property also comprised some 40ha (approx) of uncleared native vegetation.

We developed 15 ha. for flower production, whilst grazing the remainder of the 190ha., but nurtured the area of native vegetation. I might say, unlike many neighbours who appeared to degrade their native bushland. This can be easily done by untraceable means.

We have always maintained a very keen interest in the environment and this has always been a rule by which we have conducted our operations. We have been leaders in the technology of minimum water use and leaching of nutrients plus minimal toxicity pesticides and herbicides.

In 2007 at age 66 and 65 and with health problems resulting from years of growing, picking etc, my wife and I decided we should sell the business and applied to sub divide the developed portion of the property, with its water licence from the remainder which we could keep for grazing.

This created two lots, the grazing lot of approx 126ha, and the developed block of approx 64ha. The section containing the native bush was on the same title as the developed area. Improvements on this lot including bores and pumps, large poly dam, many tanks, kms of irrigation, filter systems plus sheds, fences and a valuable water licence etc. would be conservatively valued at around \$300,000 – \$350,000. All working and ready to produce.

AS A CONDITION OF SUBDIVISION, THE W.A. DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION REQUIRED A 'CONSERVATION COVENANT' OVER THE 39plus ha OF NATIVE VEGETATION.

Needing to sell the business with its associated portion of developed land in order to semi retire, we accepted the condition. There is no compensation under West Australian law!

The Department of Environment and Conservation also requires the landholder to sign up to the maintenance of Fire, Feral and Weed control on the covenanted land at his or her own expense.

This is done by leaving the covenanted land on the owners title.

The property which has good soils, magnificent views and many desirable attributes has been on the market now for almost two years and though we have reduced the price to a ridiculous level we cannot attract even a looker once they hear of the covenant.

Two estate agents have now basically refused to waste any more of their time trying to sell the lot, saying that they get quite a lot of enquiry but the moment the covenant is mentioned, the prospective clients all lose interest.

We have since tried marketing the property privately using all known medium and the result is the same. As soon as the covenant is mentioned, they hang up.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT WE HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY INJURIOUSLY AFFECTED BY THE PLACEMENT OF THE COVENANT.

HAD WE DONE AS OTHERS HAVE DONE AND DEGRADED OUR AREA OF NATIVE VEGETATION, WE WOULD NOT HAVE THIS PROBLEM.

We fear that the W.A. Department of Environment and Conservation is responsible for more and more landholders, fearful of these policies, degrading their native vegetation by surreptitious means to avoid having it taken from them.

Following our experience, how can we encourage our children and friends to look after their bush?

LANDHOLDERS WHO NURTURE THEIR NATIVE VEGETATION MUST BE REWARDED, NOT PUNISHED.

In summary,

We put our story to you in the hope that future policies throughout Australia may encourage landholders to nurture their native vegetation. Indeed to replant also.

A high monetary value, consistent with the true worth of bushland must be placed on native vegetation which is privately held.

Adequate compensation is a minimum requirement.

Meanwhile, a valuable productive property which could provide employment, lies rotting,

Dora and Ron Lindsay.