

Submission to Senate Finance and Public Administration Inquiry into Native Vegetation

From Anthony John and Suzanne Emily Kenny.

Submission

We are the joint owners of properties

These properties have been owned by various family members starting in 1895 and we are the 5th family generation of ownership. These properties have been used exclusively for grazing and farming activities throughout this time.

Due to the Native Vegetation Act being introduced we now find these properties are becoming unviable because of red tape and restrictions. We are unable to clear more cultivation to sow new pastures or fertilize country that has not been fertilized previously. There is also some contention about what constitutes regrowth with some properties clearing various trees and this appears legitimate, while others have been locked up or the owners have been fined for similar clearing. We find these laws totally unfair, unjust and unworkable as the constant threat of being prosecuted for carrying out what we consider routine farming practices is unacceptable.

As the property _____ has a road frontage we find that invasive Coolatai Grass and Tea Tree are encroaching our property from the main road and it is OUR responsibility to control it. Without being able to clear some trees to facilitate the safe use of spraying equipment, it is impossible to control these invasive species. The Vegetation Act prevents this. Some time ago we did what we considered to be regrowth control fronting _____, but we were reported by "do-good" motorists and that meant visits from officials of the Department of Vegetation and Climate Change. We were told we had worked within the Act and no further action was taken, but we were advised to gain a Property Vegetation Plan with the Gwydir Border Rivers CMA. We applied for this and an official met with us, assessed our property as having over 50% tree cover and gave us his plan. The official had no interest in what we proposed as everything was worked with a

computer. He took no notice of soil types, the work that had been done etc and if things did not fit the computer model they were out. He was most impressed there were remnant stands of ironbark, box and other species that had been carefully preserved by the family for 100 years but would offer no offsets against this as it had not been planted by design. We found his manner offensive and the plan unworkable so we rejected it.

We and many landowners we know are finding it hard to fill production or even maintain current levels due to Native Vegetation laws. Surely after five generations of managing, maintaining and preserving our land we should be considered good managers and allowed within reason to fertilize , clear or plough or land to lift production. Otherwise we should be heavily compensated for it.

We implore this Senate inquiry to do something about these vegetation laws so that genuine farmers operate viably and peacefully and be not under constant duress from vegetation officers. We shouldn't have to be continually worrying if we have committed an offence by purely routine farming practices. Surely this is no way to treat hard working people who feed our nation.

Yours

AJ and SE KENNY