

Submission to:

The Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

PO Box 6100,

Fax: +61 2 6277 5809

Parliament House,

Ph: +61 2 6277 3530

Canberra, ACT 2600

Australia.

Email: fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

Subject: Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures

Submitter: Edgar Burnett

Position: Director/Secretary of Burnett Holdings (NQ) Pty Ltd and part owner of “Lara Downs”, Julia Creek, NW Queensland.

Background: Edgar has lived in the bush most of his life having been home-schooled to grade 6, together with his brother and sister, by his mother in conjunction with the then Queensland Primary Correspondence School. This education was carried out on the 23,310ha family property which was then operated 160km north of Clermont in Central Queensland for the grazing of cattle by his father, Colin Burnett.

He then attended Boarding School at the Rockhampton Grammar School to grade 12. In his grade 8 Scholarship Exam he achieved 98% in Mathematics. In his Junior Exam he achieved 5As, 2Bs and 1C. In his Senior year, he was appointed Head Boarder Prefect and became Senior Athletics Champion as well as represented his School in Athletics Cricket and Football. His Senior Pass consisted of 4Bs and 2Cs

Submission by Edgar Burnett:

- **Impact of Native Vegetation Laws**

In the 1990s, it was becoming apparent that the Queensland Government intended to introduce laws to curtail the Land-holder's right to clear vegetation on grazing land in Queensland and it also became probable that full and just compensation would not be granted to those whose rights were to be taken away. The right to clear vegetation clearly existed because it was a condition of at least one Grazing Lease renewal that a certain area of "Nairana" be cleared – the Queensland Government had the right to terminate the Lease if the conditions were not fulfilled by the Leaser at the time, my father, Colin Burnett.

My immediate family and I were all but sent bankrupt by the imposition of Federal and State Death Duties resultant of my father's death in August 1973 and because of this type of experience, I knew what Governments can do to its people in certain circumstances especially people of a minority.

Because to this experience and because of the behavior of the Queensland Government regarding the proposed clearing restrictions, I applied for a permit to clear all of the approximately 10,000ha area of "Nairana" that would have been economical to clear, simply to gauge the situation. ("Nairana" had not been cleared anywhere near as much as the surrounding stations because of the adverse financial situation caused by the unjust imposition of the Death Duties on my father's Estate)

Well the Queensland National Parks (QNP) learnt of this application and contacted me to see if I would talk to them about selling the whole of "Nairana" to them.

NOBODY IN AUSTRALIA HAS THE MORAL RIGHT TO TAKE AWAY ANYBODY'S RIGHT TO ANYTHING PROPER WITHOUT FULL AND JUST COMPENSATION.

Therefore I gave the above-mentioned enquiry a lot of thought and as I was so sick of dealing with Government Departments over the Death Duties, I decided to talk to the QNP about selling "Nairana" to them and after about eighteen months of ratcheting up the price as much as I could, I agreed to sell to them. That move has proved to be the only way that I could have anywhere near just compensation for losing this right to clear vegetation on "Nairana".

The neighbors probably weren't very impressed as most people do not like operating grazing businesses next to National Parks, but I felt so strongly of the unjustness of the lack of compensation being offered, that I had no qualms about this action. If the people of Australia wanted the right to clear vegetation to be taken away from certain Landholders, then the people of Australia should compensate those people fully and fairly.

There is another angle of the right to clear argument and that is the one of Health & Safety. One of my cousins (and my best mate at the time) Graham Burnett, was killed in a horse accident and that accident was most likely caused by a large log on the ground that his horse tried to jump whilst Graham was endeavoring to work a break-away steer back into the mob of cattle. He came off his horse awkwardly, his head impacted the ground and he never regained consciousness. He died during the 40km Ambulance journey to the Clermont hospital. This angle of clearing land suitable for grazing is rarely heard of.

After the sale of "Nairana", I moved my wife and family to the open downs country of North West Queensland where there is no argument because there is no vegetation to clear! Because of extreme drought conditions on this property "Lara Downs" in 2005, we purchased a Richmond forest property "Mt Norman" and there is no argument there either because it consists of the type of country that is not economical to clear!

However, I still feel sorry for the many Land-holders who have not received just and full compensation for having the right to clear taken away from them. There has been some compensation granted but in most cases, it has been totally inadequate. If the people of Australia want to take away those

landholder's right to clear, well the people of Australia can pay for it, not just these minority people.

- **Legislated Greenhouse Gas Abatement Measures**

The present Government has got no right to bring in its proposed CPRS because –

- It is **not** beyond doubt that the action of human beings is bringing about climate change. A famous Australian poet wrote many years ago of Australia being the “land of droughts and floods”.
- If it was beyond doubt, this Labor Government would not have sufficient economic credentials to set up and administer such a scheme.
- The measures proposed by the Leader of the Opposition should be thoroughly investigated because it has been proved time and again that Australian Liberal/National Coalition Governments have a much better idea of how to manage the Australian economy than any Labor Government

However, in the mean time any Australian Government worth its salt should be encouraging its people to be more clean and green. There is no dispute about that.

Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to make this submission.

Signed,

Edgar Burnett

Submitted on the nineteen day of March, 2010
