

Submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee on Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures

Vegetation management laws have had and continue to have a detrimental effect on the value and future development opportunities of our property.

History

In 1969 we bought 5000 acres of virgin land covered with tea tree, ironbark and oak, all of which was unusable and not able to be milled, as it was not of size or suitable for timber milling purposes. We were able to freehold the property - located 25 kilometres North of Proserpine – soon after initially purchasing it, with the condition of freeholding being to clear and develop the land.

Vegetation Management Practices

Since purchasing the property, our practice has been to clear sections of the land and develop sustainable crops and grazing as funds allowed. In the 40 years since we took possession, we have managed to develop approximately 70% of the property. This came to a standstill when the Vegetation Management laws were introduced between the period of 1999-2003.

Over the years, we have at times managed to clear sections of the property, but funds were not available to fully develop to a sustainable level for profitable production purposes at the time. The resulting regrowth was able to get to a size that meant, at the time of full implementation of the Vegetation Management Laws, those sections fell under the criteria of being remnant vegetation, essentially therefore, locked up from being further developed. Though initially these sections were able to be used for grazing, with the thickening of the vegetation it is now totally unsuitable.

Fiscal Impact on the Agribusiness

No compensation has ever been forthcoming as a result of the introduction of the Vegetation Management Laws and our potential to expand our agribusiness into these undeveloped sections of the property is now firmly halted. As such, based on current values of similar properties in the area, as supplied by local Real Estate Agents, the potential sale price of the 30% parcel of undeveloped land has decreased approximately 66%. In fiscal terms this means a potential loss of almost 2 million dollars in the sale price of that section of the property.

Vermin and Pest Management Impact

Control of pests and vermin is becoming an arduous task because of the thickening of the remnant, as no machinery is able to be taken into the areas because of the potential damage to the vegetation present. Future control of pests such as rubber vine will therefore become cost prohibitive.

In conclusion, it is our sincere hope that the Senate Enquiry takes a common sense approach to this matter and takes into account the concerns of those with a vested interest. Our future is at stake here. It is in our best interests to ensure that our farming management practices are sustainable and environmentally friendly. We are the caretakers of the land, not abusers of it. We understand the necessity of sustainability and strive towards that goal on a daily basis. The impact of these laws is more widespread than many in the community will ever understand.

Your consideration of our submission is appreciated.