

One Tree Hill Landowners Association Inc.

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The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
Canberra

Submission to Inquiry into the Impact of Conservation Controls imposed on Landholders

The One Tree Hill Landowners Association Inc has a membership of some 100 property owners within the Playford Council Area of South Australia, with properties ranging from 400+ hectares to 4 hectares. This group represents some 600 property owners in the Eastern Part of the Playford Council Area which covers some 3,000 hectares or about one third of the total area of the Playford Council.

In August 1999, the Playford Council endorsed a Statement of Intent and submitted a proposal for an immediately effective Interim Planning Amendment Report for one third of this area (The Hills Face Zone), with a note that there would be similar PAR submissions for the rest of the area (Water Catchment Zone and Mt Lofty Ranges Area).

This Statement of Intent includes in its "Background" statement that the changing land uses within the area (all complying) have "Raised the concern of residents and community". Issues listed include concerns re water usage, conflicts in land usage at the urban/rural interface (noise, odour, spray drift, waste disposal), and the need for buffers. Also indicated is the concern that "New developments such as viticulture and horticulture, may threaten the 'natural character' of the Hills Face Zone". All of these concerns have arisen from the comments made by a small group of 'conservationists', and all of them impact negatively on the ability of landowners to use their land to achieve its economic potential by changing land usage in response to changing market circumstances.

The Statement of Intent places a high priority on "Protection and enhancement of the 'natural character' - i.e. amenity of the Hills Face and accommodating low intensity agricultural activities". To protect and enhance the 'natural character' of the Hills Face is to deny farmers the right to farm their land and reduce their function to providing an amenity of pleasant scenery, which will certainly not provide income. The same can be said for "low intensity " agricultural activities such as grazing and cropping which ceased to be economic on small acreages (less than 1000 hectares) in hilly areas more than 10 years ago.

This attack on changing land use and viticulture in particular was evident in a consultation report commissioned by the Playford Council into "Sustainable Land Usage in the One Tree Hill and Craigmore Areas". The report made recommendations in terms of restricting water usage, creating buffer zones and preventing changes to land usage which suggested that the only fit use for the land was to provide scenery. An examination of the report showed that it was flawed in terms of both accuracy and source of data, but it still made recommendations which used environmental concerns as a basis for preventing development by change of land usage. The report is so poor that the Playford Council have decided that it is usable only in part.

The conservation controls within the Playford Council "Statement of Intent" are motivated by small numbers of urban oriented people who put their enjoyment and access to the "amenity" of open space and scenery above the right of landowners to seek an economic return from their properties.

I regret that this submission is abbreviated to meet the closing date for submissions and I will welcome the opportunity to make further detail available or present material at a Public Hearing .

Yours faithfully

Bill Sims
Secretary