

## **SUBMISSION FOR INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC GOOD CONSERVATION – IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES IMPOSED ON LANDHOLDERS**

Everyone is a part of development using food, fiber, timber, oil, steel, etc. in every day life. The community is probably not aware of their level of dependence on natural resources and its development. The world's population increased by four folds over the past century. India's population alone increases by 16, 000, 000 per year. The world may well be over populated but I am happy that I won't be deciding who stays and who goes.

Development of natural resources can increase production of life sustaining foods and fibres many times over, thus creating wealth as well. The main contention being sustainability and nature conservation. People certainly have an obligation to work towards sustainability, and there has to be a lot more scientific research done into salinity, carbon emissions, carbon credits, run off, tree thickening, tree invasion etc. so we can make informed decisions.

I would like to give some examples of tree thickening in Queensland as below,

Mitchell Grass Downs-6mill. ha studied, 11% of area lost to woody weed invasion.  
31.8% increase in boree, gidyea, blackwood.

Bunya Mountains- 26% of grassy bolds invaded by forests

Fitzroy Basin-7mill ha, est 20% increase

Grazed Woodland Forests-60mill ha, significant annual growth of tree basal area. Av o.15sq mtrs. per ha. per yr. Equates to an increase in basal area of 14.35mill sq mtrs per yr. on the 60mill ha studied.

Extensive thickening of Mulga Lands

Tree thickening is mainly caused by lack of fire since European settlement and has major implications for loss of production and should be factored in to the carbon debate as well.

There appears to be a complete lack of acknowledgement of the degradation reversal that often goes with good development as in reduction of run-off, establishment of pastures, reduction of wind erosion and removal of stocking pressure on natural open country and native pastures.

While anecdotal, I would have to say that in my 27 years of contracting in development I have worked in many areas of the state, and it is my observation that most developed enterprises appear to be more sustainable than a lot of undeveloped enterprises. A lot of the undeveloped enterprises suffer from tree thickening, decline in pasture species, increased run-off and erosion. To reinforce this issue I must add that my wife and I have made a strong commitment to buying undeveloped, degraded properties. With good planning and development, including tree clearing we have turned these properties into good sustainable viable enterprises. With the 20% retention areas and re-growth, biodiversity is alive and well. On the other hand, hypothetically if our ecosystems and our neighbours ecosystems were endangered and he was not permitted to develop any, all honest observers must realise that my neighbours property is being locked up for conservation.

Recently another neighbour flew back from Melbourne to Aramac in a small aircraft. He could not help but notice the large amount of water storages in Victoria and New South Wales whereas there were very few in Queensland. The common theme today is Queensland must not make the same mistakes as the southern states but surely that must not exclude us from responsible development which will include tree clearing and water storage.

In my opinion the main reason why the government and the community want to slow development in Queensland is for conservation purposes. Queensland primary producers are expected to largely carry the cost of conservation for the rest of the Australian community.

It seems an insult to me when a figure of approximately \$100, 000, 000 for compensation for freeholders and nothing for leaseholders was being bandied around when in comparison a package of over \$1.2 billion for dairy farmers has been proposed, who are only being asked to compete interstate. Dairy farmers who would already have their treeclearing done are being compensated handsomely for the loss of protectionism only. The Native Vegetation Management legislation will definitely inhibit and in some cases will render landholders unviable. It will also have a dramatic effect on property values

It is of interest that we and our bulldozers were featured on a Landline program. We were clearing thick gidyea on land that had previously been and could be proven to be semi open grasslands. We were leaving a lot of larger trees and a fair percentage of area was not cleared at all. It was extremely interesting to note that the next program on Landline was about replanting of trees in the southern states. I believe they were trying to return the tree areas to 10% of original cover. This was thought to be very responsible and yet even though we were only clearing down to approximately 20%-30% it was not as palatable, so to speak. It is our observation that the government and the community are prepared to spend millions of dollars on tree planting but are prepared to spend very little on retaining trees. Another favourite saying of mine is "If governments cannot afford conservation how the hell can individual property owners afford to pay for conservation for the rest of the community".

I'm not even going to try to quantify the cost of conservation on landholders. The variations between ecosystems, management options and development options are extremely complex. But I will say the cost of conservation to landholders is very high. I have been encouraged by Reay Cowan of Woodbine, Prairie to include the letter he sent to Mr Welford back in February. This certainly illustrates what the cost of conservation would be to him within the gidyea ecosystem. I would encourage you to take note of the attached letter from Reay and note that he is leaving 20% of the ecosystem as retention. I would also like to point out that beef prices have increased by 30% on Reay's figures. I think any retention beyond best practice limits on commercial enterprises whether they are freehold or leasehold should be avoided completely. Then other conservation should be mainly represented by voluntary arrangements and incentives with individual landholders and acquisitions of more national parks where the whole community, me included, will pay for the conservation with our taxes. I must reiterate that my tree

clearing has been done and my concerns regarding the adverse effects of this legislation on landholders is not self-serving. It is also my belief that if extra taxes need to be levied to pay for conservation, well so be it, we as tax payers will have to pay for conservation if the government and the community demand more conservation.

My vision of the future is highly sustainable and productive developed land with best practice vegetation retention, alongside areas of extra voluntary retention and then areas of state or community owned and managed untouched land spread through the state. The combination would provide employment, wealth and life sustaining foods and fibres along with a good balance of conservation.

I have faith that good governments will not discriminate against private landholders forcing them to being unpaid conservation park rangers and I look forward to an amicable resolution to this matter.

Mike Price, "Marengo", Aramac  
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## Reay Cowans letter

Letter to the editor

Mr Welford has invited graziers to ask him any questions regarding his  
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legislation.

I have this question.

Under your legislation there will be ecosystems like gidgee is in my =  
region that will not be able to be pulled for development.

Presently I am involved with the management and future planning of a =  
5000 acre paddock of gidgee scrub.

Present carrying capacity is 50 head of cattle

Annual weight gain per beast 80 kg

Total annual weight gain from paddock - 4000 kg

Gross annual return from this paddock in its present state @\$1/kg is =  
\$4000

Value of this paddock in its present state at \$300/beast area is \$15000  
=20

Figures from an adjoining paddock developed 10 years ago as follows

Pull 80% of the timber and seed - 4000 acres at \$14 per acre - \$56,000

Carrying capacity at 1 beast to 15 acres of pulled country - 4000/15

=3D =

266 head

of cattle

Annual weight gain per beast - 140kg

total annual weight gain from paddock - 37240 kg

Gross annual return from paddock @ \$1/kg is \$37240

Value of improved paddock at \$600/beast area is \$159600

Gross annual increase in production - \$33240

Interest on development costs @ 8% p.a. \$4480

Net value of extra production per annum - \$28760

Net increase in value of country - \$144600

My question is - Assuming I am not able to develop this country, what  
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compensation would be available? How would that figure be arrived at? =  
And would there be an appeal Mechanism in place?

Reay Cowan

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