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Secretary of the Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

re: House Of Representatives Inquiry Into The Impact Of Conservation Controls Imposed On Land Holders

Please accept this as a submission very pertinent to public good conservation, and also as a formal objection to the Honourable Member for Page's appointment as chairman of the Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage.

Mr. Ian Causley's appalling lack of impartiality has been well documented over the years in the media, and his ideological attitudes about heritage conservation are exemplified by his personal organisation of the private sale of our 500 ha Pine Brush National Estate in his North Coast electorate for a dollar an acre to a man he describes as, "one of my oldest and dearest friends". Acting against the advice of three government departments, he accomplished this while Natural Resources Minister in the Fahey government.

The Sydney Morning Herald described Pine Brush National Estate, between Grafton and the sea, as, "...untouched since white settlement."

In a well recorded exhibition of his conflict of interests between his two roles, the Honourable Mr. Causley was (in his capacity as his friend's local Member) acquiring Australia's National Estate for private commercial exploitation, while, on specious grounds, formally refusing his Forestry Commission's dedication of this land as part of our adjoining Pine Brush State Forest.

However, Mr. Causley's scheme was repeatedly thwarted by standard administrative procedures. But his well-documented abuse of due process by organising the sale from Sydney without local knowledge eventually achieved his long-term goal for his friend. He achieved this by "steering through" (his words on ABC radio) the conversion of our public land (Crown Reserve) during a ten day window of opportunity (between moratoria of the conversion of Crown Land without an Environmental Impact Statement by the National Parks and Wildlife Service).

Since 1998, 97% of Pine Brush National Estate's Schedule #1 (Endangered) shrub species have disappeared during the systematic logging of the Lower Clarence Valley's last heretofore untouched old growth forest. Our last untouched healthy riparian rainforest remnant appears to face a similar doom if it remains unprotected.

Please note that all the various departmental files purchased under the Freedom of Information Act, which should have revealed the 1978 Australian Heritage Commission registration, were missing. And this classification was only discovered in 1996 through an anonymous leak from the NPWS. Outside of a few people there and in the AHC, presumably nobody else knew that the proposed Pine Brush Nature Reserve had been independently assessed, along with Kakadu and the Great Barrier Reef, as holding Australia's highest domestic conservation values. Certainly at the time, none of the Ministers or departments involved were apparently even aware of this National Estate listing.

And the ignorance persists! As recently as April 4th, 2000, NSW Environment Minister Debus in Parliament was still not referring to the land in question as "Pine Brush National Estate", and, apparently buying into the lies, last December Shadow Environment Minister Ms Peta Seaton was actually heatedly refusing to accept the truth of this classification. The NPWS itself is STILL not familiar with the nature of this AHC classification here.

Surely having a federal government body providing these assessments only to have them contemptuously ignored by decision makers at other levels of government is simply senseless.

In an effort to provide a brief overview, we append to this document (A) a copy of a short article about Pine Brush National Estate which was published in the Journal of the National Parks Association of NSW Inc.

Likewise, to further illustrate the inappropriate nature of Mr. Causley's appointment as Chairman of this important committee, we include here (B) some excerpts from official correspondence and media interviews with him about Pine Brush National Estate.

In conclusion, we wish to thank you for your attention to this critical matter and thank you for providing an opportunity to make this submission.

Yours faithfully,

Dyson Devine and Vivienne Legg

(A)

National Parks Association of NSW Inc. August 1998 Journal

Pine Brush: National Estate scandal

Some of the world's largest colonies of Earth's most threatened plants, and debatably the last vestige of the once-vast, clearfelled Lower Clarence riparian rainforest, have been discovered on 492.5 ha of botanically critical National Estate. This land has been misrepresented publicly as "ordinary", and thrown away for a dollar an acre to be illegally damaged by cattle, logging and bushrock theft, which continue apace.

This surprising land deal (concluded under the previous State Government) has shamed many who have been involved (including politicians and government agencies). Conservation groups have also not adequately pursued formal assertions that the significant conservation values lie outside a sham "conservation agreement area".

In 1996, in the Senate, Bob Brown extracted, "We cannot intervene" from Minister Hill, Federal Minister for the Environment. The Greens are now challenging NSW Minister for the Environment Allan's alleged errors of fact to State Parliament.

Hundreds of damning FOI files have now been published privately on the WWW to expose this perfidy internationally.

Go to <http://www.nor.com.au/users/gaiaguys>

It is painstakingly compiled documentation of a scandal so extensive as to impede its own resolution.

(See also NPJ February 1995.)

Dyson Devine

(B)

NSW Minister for Regional Development & Rural Affairs the Honourable Mr. Harry Woods, M.P. (correspondence to The Hon Pam Allan (now former) Minister for the Environment, 3rd October 1995: "... despite numerous claims to the contrary, the Member for Clarence, Ian Causley, was involved in quarrying on the site during the 1950s and 60s."

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Monday August 23, 1993

The (NSW National Parks) association and the North-East Forest Alliance said the 500 hectares, known as McCraes Knob, featured important flora and fauna and Aboriginal artefacts, and said its habitat was described in a 1974 National Parks and Wildlife Service report as unchanged since white settlement. However, the MP for Clarence and Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr Causley, said the land was "ordinary" and had no special conservation value. "It is a very poor piece of land. I would like to see it emblazoned on the front page of every newspaper to show how hypocritical these people are," he said.

The Honourable Mr. Causley, A.B.C. Radio, October 17th, 1994:

"Look! There are a few clarifications need to be made! I think that, ah, Vivienne (Legg) made, ah, accusations against me, about interference! Ah, I certainly didn't interfere in any of this! I think she has to understand the processes that are involved!" "And to infer that I, in some way, am favouring the owner of the land, is quite libelous!"

R J Williams DISTRICT FORESTER March 12th, 1993 Internal Memorandum:
While there are strong protection reasons for adding this area to Pine Brush State forest, other factors including the intervention of the local member (Causley) has tended to override them.

Ian Causley, February 21st, 1989 in a handwritten margin note on a report he directed his then Forestry Commission to produce for him which looked for the mythical improvements on this very limited grazing lease (which forbids improvements): "Norm, I am going to inspect this lease because if I believe (my oldest and dearest friend) Mr. Kratz, this is bullshit. If it is PITY HELP WHOEVER PREPARED THIS REPLY."

GRAFTON DAILY EXAMINER August 16th, 1993

NO PRESSURE OVER LEASE SAYS MEMBER

NO political pressure had been applied to push through a controversial crown land lease to freehold conversion on the Lower Clarence, Member for Clarence Ian Causley said.

Ian Causley "NEWS EXTRA" SBS TV December 7th, 1993

"I mean th, if you're talking about public interest, then let me say that, if you put something into a National Park, you are not serving the public interest, because what you're doing is, locking up area that they can't manage, which - in fact - is left to be destroyed by fire! And that destroys the flora and fauna with it! If you want to have area managed then you need people like Mr. Kratz! They'll, at least, manage it!" "I say this is an absolute beat up! This is a beatup of the greatest proportions! I, I mean, foh, what the hell are you on about?! A, a piece of land, that's been converted! Of no great value! Of no great value! And I have to say to you, that there are plenty of pieces of land across the state that have been converted for a dollar an acre, or less, under the same legal document! And the Labor party did it too! Nothing unusual about that! In fact, I've got plenty of examples I put, I read into hansard! Down to thirty cents an acre."

Ian Causley 2NR A.B.C. Regional radio talkback. October 7th, 1994 with Yvette Steinhauer:

"Well! It's interesting to say that they, they wanted it preserved, but they didn't want to give any compensation to the owner! I mean, that's very fine, isn't it? We sit, next door, and say, " Well! We want that locked up! We won't compensate the owner!"