

Qld
July 15 2003

Native Vegetation Inquiry
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins St East
Melbourne VIC 8003

att: Dr. Neil Byron

Dear Sir: re: Submission to Native Vegetation Inquiry

Over the last fifteen years I have been involved with Landcare & Integrated Catchment Management in various capacities ie: 3 yrs. as President of the Lockyer Catchment Coordinating Committee (South East Qld) and as a result, I have been involved with Regional Vegetation Management Planning (Brisbane Valley Working Group). However, I make this submission as a private person on behalf of my family.

As a result of Queensland's Vegetation Management Act and the interpretation as applied to our property, I estimate approximately 40% is in the colour (restricted by eleven layers of constraint). Our Property Management Plan currently being developed (with the assistance of DNR) is in limbo. Productivity and sustainability is inhibited; property values and returns are questionable whilst confusion and lack of accurate interpretation exists.

The level of understanding by many land owners of the Act and proposed biodiversity areas is not good. Inaccuracies in mapping adds to the confusion as to does the classification on existing vegetation (as per herbarium map Qld. Government) versus historical local knowledge including photographic evidence.

The duration of impacts and the factors influencing their duration is directly controlled by State and Federal Government's bureaucracy. To the grass roots people, the Government does not seem to be mitigating any of the negative impacts. If anything, recent announcements of State Budget fund allocation of approximately 8 million dollars to enhance compliance and prosecution contributes to the negative. In reality, if you have cleared everything you are put in the white with no constraints on you or your freehold title. However, if you have tried to be a good custodian of the land (left tree cover & respected biodiversity), you have maximum restriction

put on you & your freehold title; your character seems vilified and your rights as landowner seem to be nil & void (?) as a result. A Property Management Plan which addresses Veg. Management & Biodiversity on a property to property basis would do more to protect biodiversity, build bridges of trust, respect and co-operation between the relevant parties - at this point in time, is sorely needed.

Perverse environmental outcomes will be inevitable without sensible thinning guidelines, tried and proven land management practices. In my lifetime, I have witnessed times when ground cover was very sparse and wildlife even more so, with top soil going down the gully during every storm or heavy rainfall.

Community consultation is to be commended and if people work together towards consensus, then a good result is generally reached. However, in my experience, I have found that some participants will not accept a consensus position reached by a majority - they prefer to push their own agenda.

Many years ago I completed a Property Management Plan in consultation with local councils, D.P.I. and the Environmental Department which involved much time and effort. Subsequent legislation leads me to believe it was a waste of time and effort. Again I find myself doing a PMP (which is nearly completed) addressing all the current issues! I wonder what success it will enjoy? Where are the rewards for trying to do the right thing?

As a landholder with a lifetime commitment with land care & biodiversity, I feel that my freehold title has been eroded. Diminished purely for the reason that I have left tree cover and tried to improve the condition of this land from an over exploited, abused condition from early settlement days.

I disagree with the approach of special Biodiversity areas as this destroys the laws of nature. A whole landscape solution is what is needed, not fragmentation.

Yours sincerely,

RE Turkington