

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO NATIVE VEGETATION LAWS, GREENHOUSE GAS ABATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES

To: Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration.

From: Scott Hamilton

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the Senate inquiry.

With my two sons, I operate a dryland cropping farm at _____ on the Western Darling Downs.

We grow wheat, chick peas, sorghum and other feed crops for cattle.

While I understand and support some regional planning controls to stop unfettered and permanent destruction of all our native flora, the Native Vegetation Laws are extreme laws that would be have the potential to cause us great financial harm, significant uncertainty, and personal distress at the inequity and lack of concern for our rights to run our businesses and properties in an integrated and efficient manner.

Our issues are insignificant compared to many, but they are significant to us. We have left many shadelines and shade clumps on our properties for aesthetic appeal and for shade benefits for stock. In most cases the timber costs us significantly in lost income from moisture loss in crops and grass due to the tree root extractions, and invasion by feral animals that live in the trees. While some people preach about being environmentalists we have been. It would seem now that by being responsible in the past we are being punished for leaving so many shade lines and clumps of trees. A recent valuation of our farm has revealed this.

Most years, we lose over 100 metres of crop beside these remnant vegetation areas. The protected areas are not our property, but because they are now protected, this is an issue that will now never be resolved, and our production will always be diminished for which we have no recourse.

We are maintaining these areas weed free to the best of our abilities, not using them for any productive purpose, paying rates on them, and looking after them for the people of Australia. But the people of Australia pay nothing for the privilege.

If Carbon credits do accrue from these areas, I believe the people of Australia will receive the benefit, not me who is paying all the costs. Already the people of Australia are benefitting at my cost.

Another issue which will undoubtedly affect my profitability in the near term, and is related to my loss of rights, is the massive coal seam water extraction, which even state government reports say will deplete the upper aquifers that our local communities and graziers rely on.

With no licences or restrictions, it is predicted they will extract around 2 million megalitres in the next decade. The Parsons Brinkerhoff report says the aquifers are interconnected, as do the Santos and Origin EIS's.

Once the water in the coal seam aquifers drop because of the 2 million megalitre extraction, it will be replaced by the water in the Condamine Alluvium, which will mean a total collapse of this aquifer. It is also certain to have an impact on stock water bores for hundreds of kilometres westwards, and could lead to the total collapse of the pastoral industry in these areas. The coal seam gas industries have 'make good' provisions in their licences, but it is not possible to 'make good' a disaster on the scale of this magnitude.

I realise this is not closely associated with the TOR of this inquiry, but I urge the Senate to consider an inquiry into the cumulative effects on our aquifers of the CSM industry, and to make recommendations to the State Governments on mitigation measures to enable Australia's citizens to enjoy the benefits of all our industries and natural assets.

Thank you for the opportunity to supply this submission.

Yours Faithfully,

J. Scott Hamilton