

John Andrew
Commercial Forest Grower

24th February 2010

A submission to the senate inquiry into Native Vegetation Laws

I, John Andrew, own a 2.6 sq. km freehold property located 15km from the center of Gympie in Queensland. This property is my only major asset. I acquired it through a lifetime of work (now 63 years old) in rural industry and also 20 years in land surveying as a surveying technician. The latter experience was fortunate as without it I would not have been able to fend off the ambit claims of an inaccurate Regional Ecosystem Map issued by the Queensland Government. This was done through the system of Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation, a user pays system of either, "locking in" the RE map (for fear that the government would make worse encroachments in future..pure blackmail), or to pay for the supposed expertise of government to reassess its' own mistakes as to what areas are actually remnant forest on which management rights are now confiscated. (no compensation was on offer as Premier Beattie and PM Howard conveniently failed to reach agreement on a scheme that neither wanted)

I took the latter course that not only required the PMAV application fee of about \$250 but meant that I had to supply aerial photos, and many ground photos with GPS locations and fields of view plotted on a multi layered CAD drawing (about two weeks work) to illustrate my arguments in a system that was obviously resisting the truth in addition to being fundamentally unfair. The first tardy response to of my submission was either moronic or just meant to be intimidating. My response was to give a written request to suspend a second assessment. (You were allowed two before the application would go before an "independent" committee.) I got a phone call from someone about six months later. He apparently wanted to get my application off his "to do" list but it was obvious that he had a poor understanding of the issues involved so I reinforced my wish for the application to be suspended, and that seemed to satisfy him. Then a bit over a year after I had lodged the application in Gympie I got another phone call from the actual local Gympie office of DNR (since renamed DERM) (my file had previously been *rendered* to the Toowoomba office). Luckily this time I was talking to someone who understood the point of my application and the PMAV was duly issued, nearly as applied for, within a couple of weeks.

So far the PMAV I've obtained has protected me from the latest grab by the Qld. government. This grab applies to areas defined as *Native Regrowth*, i.e. land formerly cleared for agriculture but where the unfortunate owners have stupidly allowed native vegetation to come back. Their reward for maybe wanting to manage it as a commercial forest (as in my case) is to remove their management rights to the extent that their plans will be thwarted or severely hindered, without compensation of course. This can be seen as the logical punishment for not paying for a "lock in" of previous RE Maps with a timely PMAV application for which it is now too late.

Who knows what the future holds? How long will the Qld. government honor its own PMAV system as a protection against further erosion of equity?

Indications are that governments are willing to steal from a minority if they are rewarded by enough votes from other misinformed people. This is the down side of a democracy without a very comprehensive bill of rights.

END