

**SUBMISSION TO SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFERENCES
COMMITTEE**

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

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WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Closing State Forests, Lack of management in National Parks, a recipe for disaster.

Summary

In the last two decades there have been many laws, regulations and changes to policy from all tiers of Government brought down to impose environmental values upon productive industries throughout Australia. Not only has this impacted upon farming and grazing communities, but also upon Forestry industries. In Queensland, the State Government is in the process of converting the State Forests into National Parks. This submission concentrates on the impact of closing the State forests as an important resource base and economic benefit to all people of Queensland. The State forests have been determined to have high conservation values; in this submission I will argue that there will be adverse outcomes to these values if this land is locked up without active management.

Background

My family have been long term neighbours to the biggest state forest in the Southern hemisphere, the Barakula State Forest. The first Stiller in this area worked for the surveyors in the year 1900 when the original large Juandah Station holding was broken up for closer settlement. Barakula State Forest was dedicated in early 1907 under the *State Forests and National Parks Act of 1906*. *Four brothers of the Stiller family settled on land close by to Barakula starting from 1910. The point I wish to make here is that I can draw upon a wealth of oral & written history of family and others as well as my own personal observations.*

Barakula covers an extensive area of 260 000 ha, north of the Queensland towns of Miles & Chinchilla as can be seen by viewing [this google map](#). Barakula has been under sustainable forest practice for over 100 years.

Submission

I present to the Senator's attention the following supporting document (**Attachment 1**) available on the web as an article written for a public forum, "[Guest post: Barakula state forest](#) to be converted into a national park." This is an article that deserves to be read in its entirety; it has been written by a person trained in the science of forestry, who held managerial positions in the field and also served in the State Forest head office. The article gives an overview of the history of Barakula State Forest, the timber species harvested and the methodology of doing so.

The author goes on to say, "One of the reasons for declaring areas of national park is to preserve endangered ecotypes. For a national park to be declared over an area, the vegetation should be in a pristine or near pristine state."

The fact that Barakula has been producing timber for over 100 years is surely proof that the management regime imposed on this area has not endangered the ecosystem. If the place has been successfully managed on a sustainable basis for 100 years why cannot the status quo go for a 1000 years? The fact that it meets the standards for national park status confirms the success of past management."

A similar opinion was expressed in an ABC Stateline television program on the 17th July 2009 in a story called [Timber Troubles](#).

"KATHY McLEISH: From that time Moxons was well aware of the pending difficulties. Then Premier Peter Beattie promised to protect one million hectares of forest knowing timber businesses could be hurt the Government gave the industry 20 years and financial assistance to move out of State forests and into plantations. But the industry says cypress pine was not part of the plan that it was to be considered separately, because it can't be grown in plantations. But Tony Moxon says that never happened and his industry deserves more credit.

TONY MOXON: Some of these high conservation areas that the conservationists want to stop are actually the areas that's been logged for 100 years. Well it just doesn't quite seem to work for me. If it's high conservation, we've made it that way and if we're allowed to keep tending it and given stewardship of it, it will stay that way for a long time."

In the same Stateline story referred to above the Mayor of the then Dalby Regional Council now known as the Western Downs Regional Council was questioned of the environmental and economic impacts of closing down forest industries within this region.

"KATHY McLEISH: Mayor of the Dalby Regional Council Ray Brown says he's happy with the way cypress pine is harvested and has grave concerns about the capacity of Government to manage the forest without the timber industry.

RAY BROWN: I have huge concerns. While you have timber companies and organisations like that in that region they have maintained particularly timber skid tracks and everything. They all use as a buffer particularly against fire. My biggest

concern you've got a very large area there if you happen to get a wildfire or a lightning strike how do you put it out if it's not maintained properly. These timber companies, that's their livelihood. Any sign of a fire she's down tools we must put that fire out.

KATHY McLEISH: And he says the potential loss of jobs cannot be ignored.

RAY BROWN: To lose an industry like that which does employ a lot of jobs is very frustrating to our region. The timber industry has been a huge product and employer in our region. To lose that like overnight that's an impact.

RON BOSWELL: Common sense is not prevailing. The Government wants to look green; the blue collar workers are paying for it."

Stateline did up a follow up story on the [24th July 2009](#) in which the loss of jobs was highlighted.

"This week, the story of another sawmill facing the threat of closure. The owners say state government policy has destroyed their business, the government says it's not responsible. Either way, jobs could be lost and a 63 year old business could come to an end. Kathy McLeish reports from Chinchilla.

KATHY McLEISH: Eric Turner is a timber man born and bred in the industry.

ERIC TURNER, OWNER, CHINCHILLA TIMBERS: My father was in the timber industry my grandfather was in the timber industry and of course it probably comes down to the blood I suppose I don't know.

KATHY McLEISH: It's a relationship that's never waned. He started cutting electric light poles in south western Queensland in 1946. He was 19.

ERIC TURNER: I'm 83 years of age this month.

KATHY McLEISH: It's a lifetime business for a lot of timber workers. Brian Donpon has only ever worked with Chinchilla Timbers so did his Dad.

BRIAN DONPON, LOGGING CONTRACTOR: I've got a bit of a soft spot for the timber industry. I've been logging ever since I left school and I enjoy it. I'm probably just still in it because of that reason. I wouldn't say there's any fortune in it but our staff means a lot to us. We've got like truck drivers and timber skidder drivers in the bush and log cutters

BRIAN DONPON: We actually employ 13 people for this particular job alone and hence small towns like Chinchilla it'll have a fairly big effect on it if Eric shut down. It's got a huge effect on our business."

These last comments on ABC television Stateline program have concentrated on economic impacts of closing down forest industry from state forest.

Willing to be a witness to this submission at the Senate inquiry is Mr Adam Clark of Taroom, Queensland who is a retired grazier and lifetime conservationist. Adam Clark is a founding member of the [Upper Dawson branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society](#), currently holding the present

position of project officer. He also was the inaugural chairman of the Taroom Shire Landcare Group. Adam Clark and the upper Dawson branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society (must stress not the state organization of the Wildlife Preservation Society) are against the gazetting of state forests to national parks. The worst management is no management at all which can be seen by all recently made national parks. The very real risk of fire is a recipe for disaster. Adam Clark has stated, "Ideology alone will not manage landscapes, there has to be a practical person managing it at the coal face."

Also willing to be a witness is Mr. Nev Hunt, Toowoomba, Qld.

Nev Hunt has had a 40-year career as a landmanager, 30 years within what was once known as the Queensland Department of Natural resources. He was a land commissioner until 1983 & then a District manager for QDNR. His responsibilities did include forestry and Nev Hunt has an ongoing interest in agro-forestry. After retiring from the department, eight years ago Nev Hunt has undertaken consultancy work with mining companies, electricity authorities and to private individuals in regards to land management and vegetation management. Nev Hunt has been a fellow of the Australian Property Institute since 1990.

Instead of speculating on all the perverse impacts on economic, cultural and community in the surrounding areas of the State forest, I will present to this inquiry a supporting document of what the real outcomes were when the NSW State Government shut down access to State held timber reserves

Evelyn Crawford is retired at present, but has been employed in the past by the NSW Government for over 30 years as a Heritage Manager. She has been involved in Comprehensive Regional Assessments in Southern NSW as well as NSW Western Regional Assessment, which included the Brigalow Belt South Bioregional Assessment.

Evelyn was responsible for community consultation with all Stakeholders engaged in the assessment process, across the majority of research projects being conducted during the Assessment.

Her major responsibility was to assist Stakeholder groups (particularly the Aboriginal Stakeholders) to identify possible outcomes for negotiation at the completion of the Western Regional Assessment.

Attached for the information of this Inquiry is a list of the issues which were identified by Evelyn and other community members, after the completion of the Assessment process

Please refer to Attachment (2)

Evelyn Crawford is prepared to be a witness by telephone.

Conclusion

I am prepared to give oral evidence in person at the Senate inquiry hearing, with substantial evidence to support this submission. I will testify that I have no direct financial interests in the forest industry or its products derived from Barakula State forest or any other State forest reserve. My personal experience and observations will be based on knowledge of forest practice on private freehold titles, also as a person living in very close proximity of Barakula State Forest.

The State Forests have been operating on a sustainable basis for over 100 years in Queensland. They were set up with the foremost priority as a timber resource providing a benefit not only for the immediate regions but also for all people living within the State of Queensland.

In this current political climate these areas of valuable tracts of resources can be shown, to hold high conservation values must surely, point to the excellent management of State Forests in the past. It is my opinion that these lands can continue to be managed with a win/win outcome for both the economy and the environment. It shows a high level of political expediency to shut down State Forest to gain the green vote and to surrender to environmental extremism, which affects the future of many families in regional areas.

I faithfully submit this to the Senate committee,

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Dale Ross Stiller

Further reading

http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/forests/saleable_products/stateforestsprocess.html

http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/forests/saleable_products/timberproduction/harvesting.html

<http://eprints.qut.edu.au/16610/>

<http://www.toowoombabirdobservers.org/forum/viewtopic.php?p=1347&sid=61834108c3c6abd8f3bf21cbcce9692f>

<http://larvatusprodeo.net/2009/09/01/barakula/>

<http://chinchillalibrary.chinchilla.org.au/HTML/HeritageBarakula.html>

Guest post: Barakula state forest to be converted into a national park

Guest poster Peter Lear says no. Peter Lear studied Forestry at University of Queensland (UQ) and The Australian National University (ANU) graduating from the ANU with a Bachelor of Science (Forestry). He then worked for the Queensland Department of Forestry from 1971 till 1987 in various areas around the state in managerial positions, including over four years in the Dalby District, which takes in the cypress forests of Queensland. He also spent five years in Head Office in Brisbane from 1980 to 1985 working on the development and maintenance of the harvesting and marketing systems used in the Department. In 1987 he resigned from Forestry to pursue interests in small business.

The decision by the Queensland Government to convert Barakula State Forest into a National Park should not proceed for a number of very good reasons some of which I would like to outline. (See also [earlier post](#).)

History of Barakula

Barakula was one of the first state forests in Queensland dedicated under the *State Forests and National Parks Act of 1906*. The actual dedication took place in early 1907, so it has been managed as a working forest for over 100 years. In that time it has produced huge quantities of both cypress pine and hardwood timbers, mainly spotted gum and ironbark.

Over this period much of the area has been silviculturally treated to improve the productivity of these forests. A comprehensive roading system has been built for management and fire control purposes and a number of lookout towers have been constructed for fire observation in the frequent periods of high fire danger in the spring and early summer periods.

The timber has been harvested under tree marking rules, which is a selection process to ensure that the harvesting operation not only takes a commercial harvest of wood but the residual forest is upgraded at the same time. Proof of this claim is visible over much of Barakula. The fact that some of the Cypress stands have now been logged six times confirms the sustainability of the operations in this forest. Nearly all the area has been logged several times.

This ongoing work represents a huge effort by many people who worked at Barakula over the last 100 years. Before and after the Second World War the staff numbers at Barakula were in excess of 100. The current Barakula Forest estate is a worthy memorial to those who made this great effort. The local timber industry, which has relied on this forest for timber, has been one of the backstays of the country towns in the area such as Chinchilla, Miles and to a lesser extent Taroom and Jandowae.

The principal timber species of Barakula

The main species of commercial timber harvested at Barakula are cypress pine and eucalypts. Of the eucalypts, spotted gum, narrow leaf and broad leaf ironbarks are the principle species. These species are well suited to sustainable forest management practices for the following reasons:

Firstly cypress pine: This species produces prime sawn timber products. The main uses are as flooring and framing in houses. The timber has been used unseasoned for many years as a framing timber although recently it is used more and more in seasoned form. It is sought after as a flooring timber in many overseas markets now, because of its attractive appearance, resistance to rot and termites and its good wearing qualities.

As well as its prime timber qualities cypress is a species that regenerates well as long as it is kept free of fires, it has very good form which assists in maximising sawn recovery and responds well to harvesting and silvicultural treatment.

The Eucalypts: The principle species growing at Barakula are slow growing dense hardwoods. They have unique properties that make them ideal for specialist applications where timber of great strength is required. These timbers cannot be substituted by plantation timbers. Some of the main uses have been as poles and sleepers in the past, but more recently as exposed walkways, heavy duty flooring both internally and externally, in heavy load bearing applications and as wear buffers in places such as wharves.

Again these species readily regenerate and respond positively to harvesting and silvicultural treatment. They are tolerant of fire and indeed fire promotes regeneration.

One of the fortuitous advantages of the Barakula State Forest as it stands is the naturally occurring mosaic of cypress and eucalypt forests. Whilst there are areas of cypress-eucalypt mixed forest there are much larger areas of almost pure cypress or pure eucalypt forest. The advantage of this situation is that the eucalypt forests can be regularly burnt to reduce fuel build up and foster regeneration. These regularly burnt forests in turn provide fire protection to the cypress forests, which are very sensitive to fire.

What will be achieved by conversion to national park?

The short answer is nothing.

The history of national parks in Queensland shows conclusively that active forest management other than for restricted areas to cater for tourist and recreational purposes is virtually zero. Roding systems are allowed to revert to scrub and very little controlled burning is done. Fuel build up will eventually lead to fire which in the case of Barakula will destroy 100 years of sustainable forest management in the cypress forests. Barakula endures regular periods of severe fire risk, so it is not a matter if fire will occur but when it will occur. The resultant devastation will be dependent on previous controlled burning regime and the management of the particular wildfire, which is very difficult without good access (roding) and trained staff.

One of the main reasons for declaring areas of national park is to preserve endangered ecotypes. For a national park to be declared over an area, the vegetation should be in a pristine or near pristine state.

The fact that Barakula has been producing timber for over 100 years is surely proof that the management regime imposed on this area has not endangered the ecosystem. If the place has been successfully managed on a sustainable basis for 100 years why cannot the status quo go for 1000 years? The fact that it meets the standards for national park status confirms the success of past management.

It is also relevant to note that the conversion to national park means that all the millions of dollars spent in managing this area for the last 100 years plus will be wasted. This action would suggest that the Governments' commitment to employment, particularly in the bush is nothing more than hollow rhetoric. The loss of this sustainable resource will mean another loss to country Queensland's economy and in all probability, substitution with timber products harvested in South East Asia or Africa where sustainable forestry is unknown.

Conclusion

The conversion of Barakula from State Forest tenure to National Park tenure will be a retrograde step for the ecosystem, country Queensland and sustainable forest management. There is no rational or scientific justification for this decision.

This is nothing more than a decision by a government who is increasingly being advised by a minority of so-called conservationists who harbour a mistaken belief that locking away forests for ever will maintain them in their present state for ever. Mother nature does not work this way and passive management or no management regimes will have unintended consequences far greater than the scientific-based and sustainable management regime of the last 100 years.

Attachment 2 – by Evelyn Crawford
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Impacts on communities in Brigalow Belt South Bioregional Assessment, after negotiation phase of the assessment process.

As a result of the land tenure changes from NSW Forestry Estate to National Parks Estate the following impacts were evident.

General Communities:

- Employment was the largest single impact on small communities within the region, as forest industries was the major employer.
- It reduced the number of staff State Forest employed, right across the western region of forestry, which had approximately 1200 forests alone, even though the majority are small forests.
- It reduced Forestry's ability to generate the necessary income to continue normal forest operations.
- As a result of the impact on forestry, many men became unemployed. The older workforce members becoming unemployable elsewhere in their community.
- Few families could afford to relocate to find suitable employment, as forestry operations had been their only employment ever.
- Saw Mills were closed down and offered "Industry Packages" which were minimal to most Saw Mill owners.
- Morale in all the small townships became an all time low.
- Businesses in towns were affected because employment was reduced, less money to spend.
- No compensation offered to local businesses for loss of business, due to unemployment rate rises.

Socio Economic/Enterprise Development

- Forest operations – reduced production due to reduction to accessible timber supply
- Logging contractors – became unemployed in major forests that supplied timber beyond the region
- Saw Mills – Most small operators were closed down
- Non Commercial thinning operations – CDEP was to be employed as Contractors
- Cypress Oil Extraction – proposal was developed by Gunnedah Aboriginal Land Council with total State forest support
- Firewood collection, due to critical habitat occurrence
- Eco-Tourism – prevented due to National Parks takeover of the forests
- Brickette Manufacturing of forest waste, after logging – developed by Gunnedah Aboriginal Land Council and supported by forest industries
- Apiarists – extinguished existing bee sites, being leased on forestry estate

Families:

- None or limited income
- Inability to sell homes in town to relocate
- Forestry leases being extinguished and families dislocated
- Elderly people being removed off forest leases and offered minimal compensation to relocate elsewhere outside the region
- Education, including children at Boarding Schools, reduced ability to keep children at preferred schools
- Difficulties paying school fees, excursions, book/materials etc
- Added pressure on many young families already struggling
- Limited access to alternative employment

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

- Limited access to cultural heritage sites
- Only involvement with cultural heritage site management is through Joint Management Agreements, dominated and controlled by National Parks
- No access for use by Aboriginal communities for cultural purposes (this includes camping, teaching and learning cultural traditional practices)
- Tourism totally controlled by National Parks, even Aboriginal site visitation
- Aboriginal Tourist Operators have to pay National Parks, per head to take tourists to visit and learn about (their own) Aboriginal culture and heritage on National Parks Estate
- No returns to the Aboriginal community
- Limited employment of Aboriginal Sites Officers, in National Parks, after substantial promises by National Parks of additional positions.
- Limited access to funding to record oral history associated with cultural sites within the National Park.
- Interference with Aboriginal Land Councils at the Negotiation Phase of the process. I.e.. False promises to get what NP wanted. In the end the Aboriginal communities lost out!

Historic Heritage:

Literally ignored!

Environmental Outcomes:

As a result of the BBSB Assessment 350,000 ha was changed into a Community Conservation Park, which is managed by a Community Management Board, consisting of one (1) stakeholder member from 6-8 groups.

There is a strong 'Green' presence, which has support from National Parks, there is also a hidden agenda, as NP approve funding etc.

A Community Conservation Park has the same protection as a NP however, in a CCP (under special legislation) mining is not vetoed, as there is, major gas resources beneath the CCP and Gas was already being piped out of the Pilliga Forest to a nearby power station on a property outside Narrabri.

Hunter Valley coal reserves are almost depleted, so new gas fields have been identified throughout the BBSB.

So the whole idea of conservation has been compromised to allow some level of mining to occur. However, this has the potential to escalate into coal mining as other coal reserves peter out.

- NP do not manage their estate which, means that most areas of forest which were previously managed by Forestry are now left totally unmanaged.
- Fire trails are allowed to become overgrown with vegetation and debris, hindering access during fires.
- Noxious plants (Tiger Pear) is not managed on the ground, therefore setting a trap for koala's when they are on the ground. (Tiger pear causes blood poisoning and koalas cannot climb due to swollen paws and become a reluctant meal for feral animals i.e.. Cats, foxes etc
- Koala population in the Pilliga Forest is estimated in excess of 15,000 now at risk from lack of any realistic management regime within the CCP.
- Pilliga Forest shares a boundary with the Pilliga Nature Reserve and native animals that are supposedly safe in a NR are migrating onto forestry land because it is being managed appropriately and effectively.
- As native animals move into the forest, the Greens are identifying the forest as critical habitat which needs to be within a CCP for protection of native fauna!!!
- Fire hazard reduction is carried out in a minimal fashion. But this only appears to be along the major highway because it is an RTA traffic corridor and poses a risk to the public.
- CCP has not generated an increase in Eco tourism, as promised by NP, therefore has not generated any additional income into the towns surrounding the CCP.
- Cultural heritage is more at risk due to lack of management and fire hazards, trees are a major source of cultural sites and these have been lost due to fires.
- Other cultural sites cannot be located due to overgrowth of trees and vegetation