

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE INTO NATIVE VEGETATION LAWS, GREEN HOUSE GAS ABATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES.

The new laws of the Queensland government are designed to protect vital regrowth and its high diversity values. This will, apart from not achieving the desired result as pointed out in the covering letter, have a dramatic effect on land values and this will impact on the ability of councils to collect rates. The so called “vital regrowth” that is being locked up eventually means that the land becomes virtually useless for agricultural production. We now have a scenario where a landholder who has cleared every tree from fence to fence and lodged a PMAV, can keep his land totally clear and will have a lot higher value because of his production potential than say his neighbour who hasn’t cleared. This will have to be reflected in valuations used by Local Government in determining rates.

The old adage of unimproved value no longer applies if you don’t have to improve. Under the old system properties of similar soil and vegetation type had similar values, which was called unimproved value, because it was assumed that you could improve your property. Under the new Queensland vegetation laws, property improvement through timber management is no longer possible in endangered regrowth areas. So now when valuations are done there will have to be two values “improved” and “no longer able to improve”. If a property owner, for example had high value regrowth over his entire property and he is forced to let it grow to its full potential it will become virtually useless for agriculture and therefore unviable. The valuation could be up to 1/20 of the value of his neighbour’s fully cleared land with a PMAV. (This estimate was given to me by a Registered Rural Valuer)

What are the councils going to do now that they can’t rate both properties the same? The rates of the fully improved will have to go up to compensate for the no longer able to improve land, which will be unviable anyway. In a worst case scenario some land may be abandoned and no rates will be collected.

I have made these observations after consulting a rural property land valuer. The Queensland government has made no compensation for the latest laws. The original laws introduced by Peter Beattie’s government allowed for \$130 million compensation. At the time a DPI economist was commissioned and had estimated that the true cost was \$500 million. This report was taken to cabinet supposedly in the public interest and is no longer available. Some of this money was offered as an inducement to Agforce to neutralize their opposition. Then they were given the job of selling the PMAV concept to their members. So effectively there has been no meaningful compensation.

There was a maximum limit in Queensland of \$100 000.00 per property in compensation. Then many restrictions or conditions were put on to reduce the amount you were eligible for. E.g. My sister in law has a property at . Many years before the act came in; she had a scientist come out from James Cook University in Townsville who conducted some experiments on biodiversity with interesting results. To do this he set traps at

random localities. When my sister in law received her RE map it had large thatched circles on it as habitat areas. These areas are ineligible for clearing so she couldn't claim compensation for these areas. The centre points of the circles were where the botanist had set the traps and they had no other significance.

In conclusion you can grow grass and trees, and to have long term sustainable pastoral agriculture you need trees for their recycling of nutrients. This is especially important on poor soils, however a lot less trees than the greens are demanding is essential for the correct balance. If you don't have good healthy grass you will not build soil carbon. The heavily thickened state forests that aren't able to grow much grass are carbon neutral. They are storing carbon but don't do anything for the legacy load. Sequestering carbon in the soil is the only way to reduce the legacy load.

Vegetation in heavily forested areas needs to be sensibly thinned and managed properly so that it is possible to store massive amounts of carbon. Dr Christine Jones has proven that you can build soil and soil carbon with appropriate pasture management that you can't get by locking forests' up. All it takes is a bushfire, as seen in the southern states, to release the massive amounts of carbon stored in them.

As part of this submission I have included a letter I sent to Mr Vaughan Johnson during the moratorium on the clearing of high value regrowth. This letter was sent to every Parliamentarian in Queensland at that time.