

The Senate Finance & Public Admin. Comm.
P.O BOX 6100
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA
ACT 2600

Dear Sirs/

KINDLY FIND ENCLOSED OUR
"CATCHMENT COACH SUBMISSION"

SHOULD SENATORS REQUIRE
DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL CASES, THEY ARE PART OF
THE ORIGINAL NATURE OF PROBLEMS DOCUMENT.

HOWEVER SOME INDIVIDUALS ARE
VERY WILLING FOR THEIR PROBLEMS TO BE HEARD,
AND I HAVE THEIR CONTACT DETAILS.

OF GREAT CONCERN TO ME WERE
THE PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF TWO PASSENGERS (WITH
VERY CONCERNING ACCOUNTS) WHO ARE NOT WILLING
TO PUBLICALLY AIR THEIR INCIDENTS (SHADES OF
THE RED GRASS STORY PAGE 5/8 OF SUBMISSION)

YOURS SINCERLY

AL Moore

PS. OUR LOCAL AGRONOMIST Bob Mc Guffick IS VERY
WILLING TO HELP SENATE WITH OUR VEG COMMITTEE
AND LANDSCAPE ISSUES

The Senate Finance & Public Admin. Comm.
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600.

FOR "CATCHMENT COACH SUBMISSION"
Dear Sirs

KINDLY FIND ENCLOSED AN ADDENDUM
TO THE BOOKLET "RURAL LANDHOLDERS GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENTAL
LAW IN NSW", IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE "CATCHMENT
COACH" SUBMISSION.

EDO HAVE A 1800 PHONE NUMBER WITH
A SOLICITOR ON HAND MOST DAYS TO HELP PROSECUTE
OUR ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS - (CITY BASED SOLICITORS)

IN MY "CATCHMENT COACH SUBMISSION"
NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE WAS GIVEN TO THE PROSECUTING
ARM OF THE CMA. THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
AND CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE CMA. AS THE
VEGETATION MAPPING, THE RELEVANT INFORMATION,
THE PVP SYSTEM SEEM TO US TO ALL EMANATE
FROM THE ONE OFFICE.

WHAT THE ABOVE RELATIONSHIP IS WITH
EDO (ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE) AND ^{THEIR} STRONG
LEGAL PRESENCE, I FEEL NEEDS TO BE MADE CLEAR.

REGARDS

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA SENATE COMMITTEES
THE SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

From: R.L. Moore

SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION

DATE: 22nd FEB 2010

TERMS OF REFERENCE

NAME OF SUBMISSION

“THE CATCHMENT COACH” SUBMISSION

“THE TRIP”

NATURE OF PROBLEMS

Individual Cases (Documented on Coach Trip)

THE HISTORY OF THE PROBLEMS

FURTHER HISTORY AND CURRENT ECONOMICS

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

THE LANDSCAPE

CONCLUSION

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Our document will mainly concentrate on

Section (1) – as written

Also (1) (a) – as written
(b) – as written

(1) (d) – as written (per Information Sheet)

THE “CATCHMENT COACH” SUBMISSION

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA SENATE COMMITTEES

THE TRIP – NATURE OF PROBLEMS – HISTORY – CONCLUSION

THE TRIP

On 1st February 2010 I captained a coach of 46 individuals from Inverell to Canberra for the Land Rights Rally in Canberra.

The passengers came from the top of the New England Ranges, Emmaville, Bonshaw, Ashford, Bundarra, Stanborough, Inverell, Delungra, Warialda, Border Regions, Boomi, Watercourse Areas west of Moree – only one from Narrabri.

So in effect our coach load represented a full cross-section of the region known as the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment.

So we named our coach “The Catchment Coach”. On the trip down and back I circulated pads with on the top left-hand side – Name Details, then in the middle – Nature of Dispute.

I received 22 written descriptions of our passengers problems. Many current with the heavy handed, even un-Australian like tactics the implementation of the current vegetation laws now imposes on landholders.

Some of their stories were the expressions of good people in extreme stress.

NATURE OF PROBLEMS

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN PROSECUTED FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT ETC.

Case (A)

2000 acres of granite country. Fire crosses main road onto his property, gets into stacked pushed timber under recently cleared high voltage power lines. Two CMA officials told him to put out the fire, he refused. From there he received 3 registered letters threatening him with a \$1.1m fine. They also imposed total management conditions for his property.

He won the case, (a very senior official was sidelined), the owner received a tiny apology but the over zealous CMA personnel who started the action still function similarly today. This happened whilst the landholder had a very difficult personal family problem. The long term stress, the imposed management condition amount to an uncaring big stick approach affecting this landholder and his family for life – both personally and financially.

Case (B)

cleared 7.7 hectares of mainly black pine to plant oats (total property 580 acres). His present fine \$210,000.00 (he was the first booking on the coach) clearly distressed him. We have a copy of his full infringement for clearing black pine regrowth to plant oats to help keep his small number of cattle going through winter. His property in his own words has an abundance of timber and scrub regrowth. The satellite may find these infringements, but it appears the prosecuting officers have as much feeling as those bits of metal and plastic.

Case (C) & (D)

Two farmers on the watercourse west and north of Moree – problem lippia – a huge environmental problem. Landholders not allowed to do the only effective measure known to contain this increasing infestation. One lady extremely stressed and angry.

(Note: Over 9 years ago lippia was listed as a major environmental problem by Yallaroi-Inverell Vegetation Committee.)

On Friday 4 February 2010 CMA mentioned only funding for weeds is “Caring for Country Funding” targeting serrated tussock, gorse, bridal creeper, parthenium weed, chillian needle grass, mimosa and perhaps willows!

No obvious concern that this lippia weed infestation now encompasses 10,000s acres of some of the best country on, about and off the watercourse region west and north of Moree.

This problem, difficult as it may be, has dramatically enlarged under the watch of the CMA whilst they have been very busy prosecuting small offenders (under the Act) for trying to gain a living.

Case (E)

Angry lady fighting case of 5.5 hectares of 256 hectares loamy granite. Reasons – blackberry – fire control, darbys oats area – used timber for fencing and yards. Satellite - fine \$110,000 plus \$11,000 daily or fence off area - no use etc for many years – goes on title.

Case (F)

600 acres prime cropping land cannot develop. 40 acres locked up for revegetation – has other grazing area he cannot finish developing.

Case (G) & (H)

3 landholders – have problem with dodonaea (common name hop bush or shiny leaf) – takes over large areas of different soil types – gets very thick – no grass under. CMA will not recognise the problem saying it is an Australian native etc – still sold in nurseries (listed as a weed of special interest [dodonaea])

Case (I)

Elderly landholder been a mixed farmer all his life. Property recently had the 5 year unimproved capital valuation (UCV). Property used to support 2 families now regrowth infesting good area – not allowed to touch – so income greatly reduced – rates from new UCV greatly increased and farm no longer viable.

Case (J) & (K)

Two more cases – one 7 ha locked up for 15 years – other 7.5 ha locked up for 10 years – owners angry.

Case (L)

Landholder very good practical environmentalist has preserved large percentage of property with old growth white box, apple, gum, stringy, yellow box etc. National Parks classify as important diverse area, parts have woody weeds, have needs of ongoing maintenance even though on major creek and funding available – CMA funds obscure projects with much less obvious need. As timber there before 1990 no stewardship ongoing schemes available. Owner will not even think of applying for the tender process which he thinks is another typical poorly thought out and implemented strategy to lock up big tracts of good country without paying reasonably for it.

FURTHER 10 CASES - MAINLY EXPRESSED SENTIMENTS

- Freedom of choice to manage property.
- Loss of freedom to have own input without obstruction.
- Against the principle of resting (locking up) large tracts of country without compensation for owner.
- Would like fair compensation and the right to do development on our own land for every landholder.
- What happened with the concept of stewardship.
- Letting one or two overseas countries having too much control over our food etc.
- Total disgust at open slather policy for mines whilst using sneaky Government policy on farmers.
- Why do we hear of so many little farmers prosecuted for small developments, while hardly any big landholders seem to be caught?
- CMA use sneaky bully methods.

THE CASE OF BOTHRIOCHLOA-BILOBA (Twin awned red grass)

Listed as an endangered species before 2000 – took 3 ½ years to de-list. Local properties were not even allowed to contour bank if they had red grass because of fear of prosecution and not being allowed to do normal land management. For years no farmer would put up their hand as having it on their place.

It was discovered covering Inverell and McMaster Research Stations and stock routes from Glen Innes to Coolah and eventually was proved to be far from endangered and was de-listed in 2003, yet was a horrible example of the bureaucratic system – nearly instantly classed endangered – 3 ½ years to de-list.

Farmers are still understandably very shy where controversial laws such as the current vegetations laws are concerned.

HISTORY

It is over six years since the Inverell-Yallaroi Regional Vegetation Management Committee handed over to the CMA (Border Rivers/Gwydir CMA)

I will mention some of the recommendations of the final meeting (in meeting minutes).

1. CMA is urged to consult widely with the community (our CMA has a woeful record of community consultation.
2. CMA must develop and maintain strong links with existing local organisations e.g. Landcare (in six years Landcare has become a major casualty) (see Enquiry, Senate Standing Committee Rural & Regional Affairs)
3. Control of major weeds such as lippia need research.
lippia is a huge problem – I think that up to 95% of grazing country has been lost to it in some areas).
4. Soci-economic issues need to be given the same priority as ecological issues. (A major part of early Vegetation Committee Recommendations, but not given any importance with CMA).
5. Some reference was for CMA to be farmer friendly! What terminology would explain the feelings of current farmers to now knowing that there has been all along an obvious plan by Governments to penalise one sector – landholders, so Australia could comply with the Kyoto Protocol, with no compensation for this public good policy.

The community unrest and the rally to Canberra in support of Land Rights and Peter Spencers stance was not started by opposition, or farmer groups but by community awareness of unjust public policy over the years since Sepp 46.

FURTHER HISTORY AND CURRENT ECONOMICS

The community imposed involvement with all land and property development and management probably started with the simple phrase “Stakeholder”. Whereas as in my early years you and your Bank Manager made the decisions – with the excellent help of institutions such as the Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and extension officers.

At the start of the Regional Vegetation Committee process some ten groups comprised the “Stakeholders”, including - Shire representatives, Aboriginal representatives, National Parks representatives, Department of Agriculture representatives, Landcare representatives, Ultra Green and Just Green representatives, four farmers, Soil Conservation and specialty personnel – all were given equal say as the landowners in the process.

Although the socio-economic likely outcomes were of stated great importance to the Committee Hassall & Associates say (page 10 in their Report) ‘That a full regional economic assessment is not proposed to be undertaken’.

I wonder what they would report now 6 years later, with well over 90% of farmers in our area having to subsidise their farms by either off farm work, contracting, partner job, external business etc.

The current vegetation laws actually prohibit a landholder surviving in the current economic climate. For a farm business to survive the often huge current input costs it needs to grow by about 10% a year. If properties cannot be developed we are now in a socio-economic impasse – government policy is officially stifling the economic survival of many property owners.

We have been told for years, farms must be run as a business. Not being allowed to develop our farms does not help that concept!

SUPPORTING INFORMATION OF CONCERN

Hassell & Associates in their Report mentioned other key “Stakeholders” including Rural Counsellors.

Having started the New England Rural Financial Counsellors and our Management Committee over 19 years ago, one function of our half professional – half farmers committee, was to do some lobbying on behalf of our clients, farmers in financial distress.

When a few years ago management of our Rural Financial Counsellors Service was tendered out to a coastal Business Enterprise Centre (no inland board members) we became if we complied with DAFF rules, a LAG (Local Advisory Group) but were not allowed to do any lobbying.

For years our lobbying and more important our annual reports were an important independent regional professional assessment of the Rural Climate.

Now, our excellent Rural Financial Counsellors are no longer even allowed to help with the Regional Exceptional Circumstances Applications.

With so few organisations being able to do any lobbying on behalf of rural landholders, is it any wonder that an imposed radical system has had so few democratic checks and balances?

One very unfortunate consequences of these laws since Sepp 46, is by portraying all farmers as environmental vandals – city-country relations have had a huge setback.

It would appear that although we are just about the most urban country on earth, Government policy seems not to care about food security or having a productive landscape for future generations.

THE LANDSCAPE

A friend , a practical Landcare person, recently travelled through our region – his remark “Bob, what on earth has caused such a change to your lighter soil landscapes? You have large areas I remember as open grazing – now wall to wall with regrowth, much too thick to allow any ground cover such as grass – so many of your stock routes are clogged with massed understorey – what’s happening?”

What we now have is a fetish for allowing uncontrolled regrowth, little regard for what I class as a productive landscape.

I see large tracts of valuable, very well grassed grazing land now receiving these generous grants to create what? - they often are not windbreaks, not corridors, not recharge areas, not even agro-forestry – just a means of some people gaining income from an extreme system not at all concerned with productive landscapes.

Our local agronomist, _____ years has been preaching the need for good ground cover, use native species supported by good introduced pasture. Our Vegetation Committee mantra was a balanced landscape, balancing production and environmental outcomes.

I would mention the basic premise of the Wentworth Report, where farmers should receive financial assistance, when the provision of environmental benefits beyond their normal duty interfered with their ability to maintain a viable agricultural enterprise.

To date farmers have paid the full cost of meeting Australia’s emission targets while the main greenhouse gas polluters, the energy and mining sectors, have paid nothing.