

SUBMISSION TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCES

INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT ON THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OF VEGETATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES, REGULATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

PRESENTED BY ANDREW REA

I would like to present this submission to bring to the attention of the committee the impact of severe fires on the agricultural landscape and some of the factors that contribute to fire risk and the financial burden placed on land holders who are always called upon to do the heavy lifting.

My name is Andrew Rea, I am the owner of Eton Vale Station, [REDACTED]
- Freehold, Parish of Eton Vale, Located in the Local Government Area of the Whitsunday Regional Council approximately [REDACTED] kilometres west of Bowen.

Eton Vale joins the Mt. Aberdeen National Park on our Eastern boundary and the Mt. Abbot National Park on our Northern boundary.

Prior to the now Mt. Abbot National Park being excised from our then Grazing Homestead Perpetual Lease before freeholding in January 2009 it was entered onto the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission in March 2001 because of natural and cultural heritage significance. A report (attached) by Botanist, A.R Bean (1994) describes the flora and fauna of Mt. Abbot in detail and discovery of new species of flora and fauna including the described species, Clidicus Abbottensis (Sydmaenidae). The report goes on to state "Mt. Abbot is in its natural condition although there is evidence of frequent and severe wildfires, assume from burning off activities of surrounding properties, the flora of the region has presumably evolved in a regime of regular fires, this may not cause significant changes to the existing vegetation".

Our family came to Eton Vale in 1959 and we were responsible for fire management for fifty years up to 2009 when Eton Vale was converted to Freehold and Mt. Abbot declared a National Park. Our position on fire management has been vindicated by the condition of Mt. Abbot by not allowing the fuel load to build excessively and the documented observations by botanist A.R. Bean support that, although I question the description "wildfires". I thought strategic burning would be a more appropriate description. There has not been a fire on Mt. Abbot for 10 years, the huge fuel load will cause catastrophic damage to flora and fauna when a fire eventually travels through there. It will happen. Be it lightning or accidental and the description of Mt. Abbot being in natural condition will change.

Mt. Aberdeen National Park has not had a fire for 7 to 8 years. The last fire, which accidentally started from the railway line, caused a huge amount of damage and expense to adjoining land holders. While the problem was mostly caused by National Park's policy of no burning, their input to bring the fire under control was insignificant.

Putting firebreaks in every year on a maybe is not only expensive but causes erosion problems because of the steep nature of the country surrounding some National Parks.

Our family own Meekatharra Station, [REDACTED] County of Humbolt, Parish of Duckworth - Freehold, located in the Local Government Area, Central Highlands Regional

Council, about [redacted] kilometres north of Dingo on the Fitzroy Development Road.

Meekatharra boundaries the Taunton National Park which was put in place to supposedly protect a colony of Bridal Nail Tailed Wallabies. The same problem with fuel build up from the burning policy practised by National Parks has been the cause of practically uncontrollable fires to enter our property causing loss of pasture and infrastructure. The input of National Park personnel is insignificant, same old problem.

We are sitting on a time bomb and have no idea how long the fuse is

SOLUTION

There are two proverbs which I think contain a lot of wisdom.

- **IF IT AIN'T BROKE DON'T FIX IT**

Unfortunately the position landholders now find themselves in indicates very strongly the present system is badly broken and requires a completely different strategy.

- **YOU SHOULD NOT BE DESTRUCTIVE UNLESS YOU ARE CONSTRUCTIVE**

I have made a number of destructive points in this submission but in being constructive I believe the solution is not that hard. If all involved in this problem sat down around the table and respected the views of everyone, and most of all, the goodwill to achieve a positive outcome for the good of the environment and all that spins off it for the benefit of all Australians.

I would like to thank the committee for giving our family the opportunity to present this submission on this pressing matter. If there is any points that the committee would like to clarify, I am only to willing to help.

Andrew Rea,

