Paul Flipo

Inquiry into Native Vegetation Laws
Senate References Committee
CANBERRA ACT

I wish to lodge a submission on the Queensland Native Vegetation Laws.

I am concerned about the loss of value and productivity, and non-existence of compensation; but more so about the corruption, prejudice and incompetence in enforcing those laws.

I applied for a permit to clear on 1 May 2002 and no decision was made for 17 ½ months, when it was refused on 13 October 2003. For the last few months it was deliberately put "on hold" until a new state vegetation map, version 4, was drawn up and released on 10 September 2003. My property went from having about 200 hectares (Ha) of "endangered" vegetation to about 7,600 Ha of "endangered" vegetation, so that my application for that area could not even be considered. Also, about 2,000 Ha that had been mapped as regrowth went to remnant.

The first herbarium inspection was held on 27 February 2003 (10 months after my application was lodged) by a Herbarium officer and a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officer. The inspection seemed superficial and incompetent and it was after this that my application was put "on hold".

The DNR officer returned 23 April 2003 for salinity tests "targeting areas of salinity". He sampled soil at 10 sites (12 had been planned but 2 were dropped when I said they were very similar to sites with very low readings (100 u S and 0 u S) (Brisbane water is about 300 u S). Of these 10 sites only 2 gave high readings. (One of these I can easily explain and show not to be relevant, the other I don't understand). When his probe registered 0.0, the officer recorded it as "no reading". On passing an area of white clay he identified it as a severe salt pan despite my explanation it was clay in a creek channel. When his probe registered 0.0 for this area he said "Ah, but there's salt there!". His report reads "Visual indicators of salinity".

After my appeal 2 further salinity assessments (by the DNR) and 2 further vegetation assessments (by the Herbarium – the second including my representative) were made.

Why was this necessary? Did the Herbarium and DNR officers believe the original assessments could not stand on their own merit?

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There is considerable reference to “discharge” and “recharge” areas but no evidence is given for their existence.

I am quite prepared to give more detail in all this but it will require many hours of explanation and discussion.

When I met with Crown Law I believe they advised the DNR not to go to Court with the evidence they had compiled.

I had to employ a soil scientist and a vegetation expert so that I would be taken seriously.

I believe the DNR and Herbarium have reports which have not been released to me.

In relation to loss of land asset value and productivity I offer the following figures:

On 14 November 2006 the National Parks offered me a ‘favourable’ valuation of $35-$70/ac for my undeveloped land on their boundary. At about the same time a wheat property not quite adjoining me was passed in at over $200/ac. A well developed grazing property on my northern boundary, “ ” is due for sale soon. (Sale delayed due to floods). When auctioned it will give a very current valuation.

A carbon store of 20 tones/ac has been calculated for my property (current value $10-$30/tonne??) but cannot be sold under the current vegetation management laws.

A wheat property on my eastern boundary harvested about 1/3 tonne/acre last year. At $240/tonne this returns $80/ac. In the last 10 months I ran agistment in the adjoining paddock returning about $1/ac. Wheat returns have varied from 0 to 1 tonne per ac. My stock returns can vary in a similar proportion.

“ ”, the well developed property, claims a stocking rate of about 1 sheep/2 acres compared to my agistment stocking rate of about 1 sheep/11 acres.

I would be very pleased to give further detail on any of the points I have raised.

Yours sincerely

Paul Flipo