

**Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology & the Arts**

**Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2000-2001, (23/11/00)

**Outcome: 1**

**Question: 16-38**

**Division: Biodiversity Group**

**Topic: Land Clearing Cap**

**Written Question on Notice: 16 - 38**

Senator Bishop asked:

- What level would a cap on land clearing in Queensland be set at?
- What level of reduction in land clearing in Queensland would occur over what period of time?
- Outline hectares reduced over each year the cap is active.
- Would regrowth be included in a cap?
- Will remnant permits be bought back before regrowth permits?
- Will permits to clear remnant native vegetation that is classified as 'of concern' be bought back before other classifications of native vegetation.
- In Queensland regrowth on freehold land is not assessable development. How does the Commonwealth envision regrowth on freehold land will be protected in the context of a cap when under Queensland's Vegetation Management Act a permit is not required for clearing freehold regrowth?
- How would a cap be incorporated into Federal legislation?
- Would existing tree clearing permits on leasehold land be retired through acquisition and at what cost to the Commonwealth?
- How will a tendering system for permits be administered?
- What is the estimated cost for establishing and operating a tendering system?
- What government department would provide the checks and balances to monitor a tendering system, and what would these checks and balances be?
- What Federal departments would liaise with what State departments to determine and conduct the administration of a cap on clearing in Queensland?

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- What would the Commonwealth be willing to spend on land clearing permit purchase?
- What department will that come from?
- How would the carbon on that land be secured?
- How does the Commonwealth envision ensuring that land will not be cleared in the future?
- Would this be through a change to the title of the property?
- How would State and Federal legislation interact on this?
- How will clearing under existing permits be limited?
- Will funds to control land clearing in Queensland come exclusively from the Australian Greenhouse Office or will it also come from sources relating directly to the protection of biodiversity or the prevention of salinity?
- How many tonnes of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions does the Commonwealth plan to quantify being sequestered through land clearing in Queensland?
- What is the dollar value of each tonne?

Answer:

Under the Australian Constitution, Queensland has primary responsibility for land management in that state, including for its own land clearing regime. However, the Commonwealth recognises the important implications of current Queensland land clearing rates, in particular that Queensland's current land clearing regime does not provide an acceptable greenhouse outcome. The Commonwealth considers wide community acceptance, particularly by farmers and landholders, as essential if vegetation management is to be effective and if sustainable land management is to be achieved.

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The Prime Minister has made it clear to the Premier of Queensland that the Commonwealth is prepared to consider funding assistance in relation to land clearing restrictions on a basis that meets Commonwealth greenhouse objectives. He has also agreed to discussions between Commonwealth and Queensland government officials. These discussions are currently exploring possible options to implement a set of arrangements that would achieve a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from Queensland land clearing. The Commonwealth is also continuing to have discussions with senior Queensland farming representatives, with a view to achieving a mutually acceptable outcome.

The Government will consider whether funding is required in light of factors including outcomes of discussions with Queensland, and with farming organisations.

Consideration of possible funding sources, assessment, and related matters are therefore premature.