

Russell & Rhonda Wason and Ben & Teresa Day

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Written Submission – Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment  
Bill 2015

I will start our submission by giving a brief outline of the history of our cattle business and what we envision for its future. As we have also held this land for over 100+ years I believe we are the best people to give you a history on the area of Grongah National Park which we care for.

In 1878 “Mudloo” our property, was taken up by James Wason. (my Grandfather’s Grandfather) Along with the freehold property, portions of State Forest were also acquired under leasehold agreements in order to run a large and sustainable family cattle business. In 1946 my Great Grandfather took up further portions of state forest land under leasehold agreements.

Currently we run 750 head of DroughtmasterX cattle in a total grassfed enterprise which we breed ourselves and keep cattle right through to the meatwork stage of approx 300kg carcase weight. We are able to breed and keep our own replacement heifers, so our only cattle purchases are replacing our bulls every three years. We feel we are in a very fortunate and rare position where we are able to run a closed herd.

My two boys are the sixth generation of the Wason family here on Mudloo. My husband Ben and I, and our two boys live here on the property along with my parents, Russell and Rhonda Wason. We run our cattle business as a partnership ‘Mudloo Pastoral’. Our future for the short term (5 years) will continue along successfully running our cattle business, with current cattle prices at an all time high and a fantastic start to this summer season this seems easy enough to do. Our long term future is hard to predict. Although our boys are only young (aged 7 & 9) they are keen participants in all farm activities and in the future we hope that they will continue to have this interest. However

unfortunately we may not be able to give them the opportunities that our parents were able to give us.

In 2006, five generations after my family originally started our cattle business, without any prior warning these Leasehold Agreements, were transferred to Stock Grazing Permits. Previously our Leasehold Agreements were for periods of 30+ years and had always been reissued. The Stock Grazing Permits that we were now given were issued with an end date of 2020. This was a Lock Out date. You can imagine our concern when we had cared for this land and run a successful business on this land for over 100 years and were now being told our business and livelihood had to cease. It is hard to believe that we could run a successful, profitable and sustainable farming enterprise all at the same time as preserving and caretaking this land, but somehow the government think that they can do a better job. The government believe that people with no connection to the land and with no reason to care for the land will do a better job than a farmer who relies on it for their very living.

Currently the total amount of land we hold under Stock Grazing Permits is 6,397 hectares, 1,416 hectares of freehold land and 879 hectares in agistment land. A small portion of our freehold land is actually right in the middle of the Grongah National Park, this land will also become useless to us as it will be non-accessible and worthless to us in both cattle production and in land value. As you can clearly see, our business will no longer be viable once we are unable to use the Stock Grazing Permitted area.

Grongah National Park was originally Marodian Forest Reserve. It was reserved for it's timber. The area which our Stock Grazing Permits cover has been logged and rung barked. Logging in this area was done as recently as the late 1990's. This area is lightly timbered with patches of vined scrubs. All of which including the scrubs have been logged. The Marodian Forest Reserve was changed to the Grongah National Park in 2006 without any scientific assessments or valid reasons for the change. As far as we are aware there are no areas of ecological significances in this park. It was a deal done by the Beatie Government at the time which allowed more percentages on paper of National Parks in Queensland.

In our 100+ years of looking after this land, we believe we have done an exceptional job. There are very few noxious weeds and only small patches of lantana. Each summer we physically walk each creek bed at least twice and pull burr and wild tabaco by hand. When needed, we repair washed roads and

creek crossing using our own farm machinery and employ contractors to push and clear lantana infestations and clean out waterholes. We complete hazard reduction burns in areas of this land inline with permits issued from the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service.

We have always used a low stocking rate as per our Lease Agreements & Stock Grazing Permits and we regularly control feral animals such as Deer and Dingo's. Just this year pigs have become an issue in other areas of our property, which we are trying to control by trapping, however these too will inevitably spread to the National Park in the very near future.

The reality for us is as simple as this, our successful, profitable, sustainable farming business will become an unviable hobby farm. This is a very emotional topic for both my father and myself, and I am unable to even hold a simple conversation or even write about this topic without tears rolling down my face.

As mentioned earlier we currently run 750 head of cattle on a mix of freehold, stock grazing permitted area and agistment land. As there is only 5 years until our lock out date, our family has had a number of conversations regarding a plan for the future. For us, a future without stock grazing permits means a full-time off farm job for my husband, a part time off farm job for myself, and a retirement on the pension for my parents. When we lose the stock grazing permitted areas, our land holding will then became too small to be able to make agisting land viable, therefore we will also have to give up our agistments. Leaving us with 1,416 hectares of freehold. 63.74 hectares of which will be surrounded by national park with no access and useless to us. We will then be classed as a hobby farm! That's a pretty big slap in the face, and "thanks for looking after everything for us for so many years", from the government. Government is basically saying to us "You've done such a great job at looking after the place we now want to call it a National Park, Ohh but you can't use it any more. We'll look after it from now on"

The sad part is, all of this land in 10 years time will be a weed infested, fire hazard area that is covered with feral animals. The Government won't let a successful business run cattle there as it apparently degrades the eco system and doesn't fit in their legislation, but are happy to have hundreds of deer, pigs and dingoes run wild. Where is the conservation of nature in that?

In relation to the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Along with details of our specific story above, I would like the following items to be carefully considered:

- We believe a National Park much like a heritage listed building needs to be looked after. If it is not carefully looked after and regularly cared for, the very thing you locked it up or shut the door to preserve will not be there in the future. It will be destroyed by termites or infested with weeds and feral animals.
- If cattle have grazed this land for well over 100 years, they are now an integral part of the eco system and cannot be removed without careful consideration of what the impacts will be.
- If a farmer(s) has cared for land using the same techniques each year for over 100 years, and this land is now considered to be National Park worthy. Why not let the farmer(s) continue to use the same techniques that have proven to be successful for the next 100 years.
- Cattle are not to be grazed in National Parks according to legislation. So change the name of the park. Keep all the same conservation objectives and principals, but allow grazing to be one of the sustainable outcomes. Instead of a National Park, call it something else.
- Make the conservation of nature the priority, HOWEVER this conservation needs to be scientifically proven. Tell me what particular area in my permitted area that I need to look after and in what specific way and I will make that happen. Allow us the farmer(s) to be the caretakers of that conservation area.
- Parks and Wildlife Rangers do not have the time or the connection to the land to take care of these areas like a farmer does. But they do have time to hold regular meetings with us to discuss issues that may need to be addressed. Allow the permit holder to do the work of the Ranger. Discuss upcoming burn permits, the infestation of lantana in a particular area etc etc. Make a plan and work together to make it happen.
- Allow permits to be issued on a case by case basis. Once again the Ranger needs to be involved, this will allow scientifically proven significant areas to be carefully cared for.

As cattle produces we believe that a sustainable environment and a successful farming business are the same thing. You cannot have one without the other. I ask you please to take our particular story into consideration when thinking about how the changes to this legislation will affect not only my family but also members of your own community. There are many more stories exactly like

ours out there. One small change here, could greatly affect many farming families.

Kind Regards

Teresa Day