

SUBMISSION TO THE AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

From Charles Peter Orme WILSON and Geoffrey Marc KAVANAGH

T/A Slatey Creek Partnership

[REDACTED]  
Dingo 4702

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
April 19<sup>th</sup> 2016

Re: Vegetation Management Bill and [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**BACKGROUND on our issue**

Our families are long term farmers and graziers in Central Queensland based at [REDACTED] on the Mackenzie River and Springsure Queensland

The Wilsons have owned [REDACTED] for 10 years coming from Emerald where we farmed for 25 years. Over the past 10 years we have developed the property to a very high standard and it now boasts 1500 acres of irrigation producing cotton and organic cattle feed, 3500 acres of dryland farming, an 800 organic breeding cow herd as well as finishing these organic progeny.

Recently as part of our own 5 year plan, we have invested in a further 500 cows, and a new property at [REDACTED] to accommodate all the cows (up to 1500). The aim is to allow [REDACTED] to be used solely for fattening high quality MSA, PCAS, Organic cattle suited to the premium export markets of asia.

The new property [REDACTED] is to be used solely for breeding purposes

We purchased the leasehold [REDACTED] in partnership with the Kavanagh family who are generational graziers from the Springsure district. Geoffrey has high sustainability credentials as well having been involved in all facets of irrigation water policy at the highest level in this State.

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The reason I have detailed this is to show that we are committed agriculturalists. We are also committed to sustainable agriculture through the organic beef certification process, Cotton, Grains and beef BMP certification processes, as well we have vegetation offset areas set aside.

██████████ is suitable to us because of its location and its variable topography and the fact it has areas of trees and valleys that are very suitable for cattle breeding.

## OUR ISSUE

Under the old leasehold title, there was a large remnant area of approximately 1200 ha locked in as well as a similar area of marked regrowth.

Under the present laws (that are subject to change under the proposed bill), we could freehold the property and then clear the regrowth areas with certain guidelines.

We purchased the property fully understanding these rules and valued in the purchase price the ability to freehold and clear.

After we settled the property in October last year we went about freeholding it. This process was prolonged by the Xmas /New year holiday period and finally after getting forestry approvals we had freehold title issued on March 3rd 2016

We were told by the Department it could take a month for the new PMAV to be issued.

**Having no notification of the issuing of the PMAV, we were advised to lock in the PMAV by our advisors. On March 17 we lodged our form to lock in the new PMAV. Unknowingly to us, this was the day deemed by the bill to stop all processes.**

**This was a tragedy for us and our plans. We had paid the State \$280,000 to freehold and we now were unable to carry out works we paid for. This payment was on top of the \$330,000 for stamp duty.**

By taking the expansion plan of our business, as we have outlined above, we will be creating a further 3 fulltime employees and increasing the export of high value organic beef to our Asian neighbours.

The restrictions placed on us by the new proposed bill will curtail our breeding herd and reduce jobs and production.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP SORT OUT OUR ISSUE

- An easy way would be for the committee to tidy up the paperwork by moving the date for the start of the “onus of proof” and moratorium to the 18<sup>th</sup> March when the Bill was actually tabled. I have been informed it was drafted and dated the 17<sup>th</sup> with the court secretary believing it would be tabled on the 17<sup>th</sup>. It actually was tabled in the early hours of the 18<sup>th</sup>. If this error was remedied, since we put our paperwork in on the 17<sup>th</sup> our form would be dealt with and we would have what we were offered by freeholding the property.
- Another option would be for you to ask the Hon Minister Lynham to process our PMAV form to complete the Governments obligation when we paid \$280,000 for the freehold title.

## OUR COMMENTS ABOUT THE BILL

- We believe that Freehold title should carry some greater value than leasehold and should be recognized as such. Putting restrictions on clearing on regrowth to Freehold land is very tough. Premier Beattie took away the right to clear Remnant forests with no compensation to landholders for lost productivity and we have come to fully support this to protect the reef and biodiversity, but how many times will the Government take away property owners rights? This must stop and there needs to be bipartisan agreement to legislation to set it in concrete so investors like us can invest with confidence.
- We believe that by working in “Neighbourhood catchments” farmers, NRM groups and government could work together to create large joint areas on boundaries that would enhance the areas protected for biodiversity without impacting on farm production. Surely all groups working together to achieve a win /win is better than draconian laws that inhibit production.
- We believe that the self assessment process for high value agriculture has been abused in some areas of the State and we agree that this should be clamped down on. Some in our Industry ruin good laws for everyone by doing the wrong thing.  
In the Fitzroy catchment, and where new water projects are being proposed by the Federal Government under the Northern Australia programme please ensure the new bill allows for vegetation clearing in these areas as well as for others who can genuinely show and prove high value agricultural development plans.
- We also agree that the waterways providing water to the Great Barrier reef should have vegetation guidelines on them for protection.

We believe our case issue is probably unique due to the fact we put the paperwork in on the day of the Bills lodgement (or the day before!). To deny us our rights under the agreement to freehold because we lodged the form on the 17<sup>th</sup> March would we believe be mean spirited and wrong. We urge you to consider our request and also consider our proposals for changes to the Bill.

Thank-you for the opportunity to have some input into this process

Yours Faithfully

Charles Wilson  
Geoffrey Kavanagh

