



Submission to Land Tenure Inquiry on behalf of the Protect the Bush Alliance

3rd August 2012

Protect the Bush Alliance

At a meeting in Brisbane on Monday 16 July it was agreed to form an Alliance of people and organisations to **Protect the Bush**. The meeting included representatives of Birds Queensland, BirdLife Southern Queensland, National Parks Association of Queensland and Wildlife Queensland.

Since the Alliance has yet to establish a working secretariat, BirdLife Southern Queensland is registering the Alliance's interest in the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee's enquiry.

Aims of the Alliance

To advocate the protection of areas of High Conservation Value

To identify and encourage activities that improve understanding of their biodiversity and environmental values.

Priority for action

A particular concern of the Alliance, which in fact precipitated its formation, is the possibility that Bimblebox, a declared Nature Refuge, will be mined by Clive Palmer's China First project.

The property was bought in 2000 by a small group of concerned landholders and residents to save it from being cleared. The previous landholders continue to be well respected graziers in the region.

In recognition of its high conservation values, the National Reserve System program (at the time of the Howard Liberal Federal Government) contributed over \$300,000 towards the purchase.

A 'perpetual' Nature Refuge Agreement was signed with the State Government in 2003 which is the highest level of protection that can be afforded to private land in Queensland. Bimblebox thus forms part of the National Reserve System of Protected Areas.

Bimblebox is situated in the Desert Uplands bioregion, considered a biodiversity hotspot, but where less than 5% of the area is held in conservation reserves.

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Bimblebox Nature Refuge consists of over 95% remnant woodland (woodland that has never been cleared) with an understory made up predominantly of native grasses and shrubs. It is an island of biodiversity set in a sea of cleared pasture. It is unlikely that an offset of equal value is available anywhere in the vicinity.

There is abundant wildlife on the property, with around 150 bird species counted so far, including the vulnerable Black-throated Finch and Squatter Pigeon.

Bimblebox supports one of the highest levels of native plant diversity in the region, with almost 300 species identified.

Bimblebox currently serves as an example of the coexistence of cattle production and biodiversity conservation.

A key objective in establishing Bimblebox was to undertake research and monitoring to demonstrate and evaluate the integration of cattle production with nature conservation. Notable examples include the study of the interaction of fire and grazing being conducted by the Queensland Herbarium; the development of long-term carrying capacity models for the Desert Uplands by the then Department of Primary Industries and Forestry; and the biodiversity monitoring in cleared and intact woodlands by the CSIRO with the purpose of developing recommendations for graziers to manage biodiversity.


Since its gazettal in 2003, the managers have removed much of the exotic weeds and grasses, and shown that sustainable and profitable commercial cattle production can coexist with the conservation of biodiversity.

The Alliance's Proposal

Any Nature Refuge with similar concurrent biodiversity and economic values and with dedicated management should be afforded the same protection currently afforded to National Parks.

It is our belief that this is the future of conservation in Australia where 90% of the land is under the control of private managers. We owe it to the future and our children.

Yours faithfully



Grahame Rogers

Convenor