THE IMPACT AT "WALHALLOW" OF THE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACT

We are Peter & Sue Jolidie & we own the property, "Walhallow". It is our livelihood, our home, our life. We raised our 3 children there & have been through good seasons as well as droughts, fires & floods & we love it. "Walhallow" is located 62 km North of Roma. It is 11735 ha comprising of 3833 ha Forestry Lease & 7902 ha of Freehold lease in mostly undulating country which has a variety of soils & it is always stocked sensibly. Peter has lived & worked there for 41 yrs. The purpose of our presentation is to illustrate the adverse impact the Vegetation Management Act has had on us, as has for many other farmers & consequentially the local communities as well as the Qld economy.

Our property was first settled in 1937 by Peter’s Grandfather, Mort Hamilton. The land was mostly open country with scattered trees. There was no permanent water until we put in 10 watering points, 5 of which were permanent. We have put in another 32 watering points since leasing the property which allows all the native animals & birds in the area & our livestock to use all year round. On seeing the problems Mort had with Govt Dept we decided to Freehold it for sound management practices. Mort had the Lads-Dept wanting him to improve the land but Forestry Dept wanted him to leave all eucalyptus seedlings that were invading his improved pastures. In the process of Freeholding, the Forestry Dept decided to renew 1/3 of "Walhallow" and we have a 25yr lease in which we are supposed to be able to graze, however however we have no longer able. The other 2/3 of the place was converted to Freehold & we paid unproved value of the land & bought the commercial licence. This process took 1yr. Within 2yr of it being a Freehold tenure, the Beanie Govt had brought in the Vegetation Management Act, which meant 1/3 of the Freehold land was stocked, making it illegal to improve our land to its full potential.

The photos we’ve taken show the substantial thickening of vegetation on our land since people settled here. The coloured areas on the supporting Vegetation Management map are where it is most prevalent that the trees are choking out the grasses leaving bare earth, where no animals could survive, making it virtually useless land. We only have a 400mm average rainfall, which in most years only wets the trees. There is not enough precipitation to grow any volume of grass as well.

Mort had to repeatedly clear what was potentially the best grazing for 34 yrs, yet there were more trees when he sold it to Peter than when he first settled. We also have been continuously improving the pastures since then to keep it productive, in order to graze cattle & produce beef/feed for an ever increasing population. We also notice that all our neighbouring properties have the same regrowth problem, as do many areas around Qld.

The Vegetation Management Act will continue to have an adverse impact on Queensland’s capacity to grow food for the future, for generations to come. The majority of farmers are pessimistic about their land. They feel it is not possible to keep the pastures & keep it valuable, useful & productive.

WHY HAS TREE CLEARING ON AGRICULTURAL LAND BECOME ILLEGAL ???

[Additional text not clearly visible due to image quality]