

Tamborine Mountain Landcare
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LANDCARE
QUEENSLAND

18 June 2003

Productivity Commission
LB2, Collins Street East
Melbourne, Vic. 8003

Re: Inquiry into the Impacts of Native Vegetation and Biodiversity Regulations

Our association is concerned that a focus on economic impacts of native vegetation and biodiversity regulations will concentrate on short term economic impacts and ignore the long term adverse economic and environmental effects which could result from land degradation if native vegetation and biodiversity are not protected.

Tamborine Mountain Landcare was set up at the beginning of this year to continue the work of a three-year project - the Tamborine Mountain Escarpment Management Strategy Project - funded by the Natural Heritage Trust. \$231,000 of federal funds were given to the project and over \$400,000 of in-kind contributions were provided by the local community. The project was supported by seven community associations as well as the two local councils (Gold Coast and Beaudesert), Queensland National Parks and Wildlife, and the Rural Fire Brigade. Our aims are to ensure the long term preservation of the natural environment of Tamborine Mountain (TM) for future generations. The benefits will be felt far beyond TM from reduction in soil erosion, improved quality of water run-off, as well as the protection of the aesthetic values of TM for the attraction and benefit of residents and the ever-increasing number of tourists.

As a result of the NHT project we now have a strategy plan which we are proceeding to implement in close co-operation with our local councils. One of the problems we have had to deal with has been the lack of vegetation protection in the Beaudesert Shire planning scheme. This will be remedied in the new planning scheme due to be gazetted by July 2004 but in the meantime clearing on the steep escarpment has resulted in serious erosion causing loss of habitat on the Mountain and silting of streams off the Mountain with the potential for future land slips causing further damage.

We believe regulations to ensure sustainability of ecosystems are essential for productivity and sustained economic outcomes in the long term despite possible short term negative impacts. The dire consequences of neglecting to protect the environment are evident today in the salinity problems of the Murray-Darling system, the wheat belt of Western Australia and the Lockyer valley west of Brisbane. Productivity in these areas has been seriously reduced so that crop options are now limited to salt tolerant species and the cost of reversing the problem is astronomical. Problems in the Murray-Darling are even more extensive due to reduced water flows and restriction of irrigation and water supply to the lower end of the system. What effect

has this had on productivity, what is the cost of solving the problem and how much will it cost Adelaide to find an alternative water source in the meantime??? And what will be the cost to producers and residents in the future if nothing is done about the problem?

We submit that, in considering the impact of native vegetation and biodiversity regulations, it is essential to look at the 'big picture' and the long term, rather than to respond to short term economic pressures regardless of how urgent these may appear.

Yours faithfully

Elizabeth Russell, Secretary