

W A PROPERTY RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (WAPRA) INC

Clearing Permits

☐ *Would a strategic approach to clearing, through a strategic purpose permit, benefit you?*

With the effective 'clearing ban's on broad acre agricultural land, which causes financial detriment to individual land holders – all clearing permits should be treated identically.

We should not have one 'its not going to happen' rule for private land holders and strategic purpose permits – 'free for all' for all government agencies, statutory bodies and all three tiers of government.

With the current EP Act making fire prevention and hazard reduction burning illegal clearing there must be free clearing permit applications as it is in the interest of public safety.

☐ *Is the 'purpose component' reasonable to apply considering the added complexity of assessing this type of clearing permit?*

No.

Tidy up the legislation remove the clearing restrictions on Private land holdings and focus on the important environmental impacts of toxic waste, waste management, and looking after and caring for the national forests, and all titles that are held in the Sates name.

All extensive reports generated by the applicant have an Property Right attached to them, however the extensive and expensive data collected has been used freely by the Department and its Agencies at no cost to themselves.

☐ *Is the proposed fee structure fair and does it adequately reflect differences in the financial capacity of clearing permit applicants?*

No. The fees are in response to a large cumbersome, expensive to run government department overseeing a large cumbersome contradictory badly written piece of legislation and regulation.

It appears on the face of it that clearing occurs on a large scale and frequently in the suburbs or areas to be developed in the metropolitan area however prosecutions are prevalent in the rural communities for very small areas, and fire safety protection.

I understand offsets of substantial sums are paid to allow the development clearing and are paid to the Department/Government. **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY QUESTION ON NOTICE 3993 – TABLED PAPER Table 1: Government funds expended on Carnaby's cockatoo conservation since 2008.**

Small landholders wishing to clear small areas for development of their properties cannot afford the sums recorded in this document.

☐ *What is the likely impact on your business or industry of the proposed clearing fee structure?*

It creates a level of those who can afford larges sums of fees and offsets will be given advantages over small land holders who do not have access to the large sums quoted. **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY QUESTION ON NOTICE 3993 – TABLED PAPER Table 1: Government funds expended on Carnaby's cockatoo conservation since 2008.**

Agriculture and freehold land have been unfairly targeted by the EP Act and as such we have seen a reduction in production across the state – which was obviously the aim of the Act, and the loss of expansion of

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productive land and enterprise. This unofficial ban has stopped many from applying to clear and the application process is already cost prohibitive.

The flow on effect costs more to the community than currently understood.

As you have extensively stated Costs have to be recovered. Businesses have overhead and running costs to cover just as Departments do. As agriculture is in the majority a price taker not a price maker these costs will stop with the producers as they cannot pass them on.

The restrictions on clearing has already seen productive enterprise decline in this State this is another restriction that will see further reduction in economic growth of our State.

Water licence and permit fees

☐ Do you consider it reasonable for taxpayers to pay 100 per cent of the cost of assessing water licence and permit applications and if so, why?

For the benefit of all taxpayers in the State the removal of the onerous administration of the Department would be the most cost effective.

As taxpayers, employers and direct contributors to the State's financial economy Agricultural Producers already contribute substantially to the State's Revenue income.

A reduction in the red tape surrounding the application and ongoing conditions and restrictions of use would reduce the workload and cost to both the Department/Taxpayers and applicants.

We have already ascertained the amount of water available in our aquifers with all our research, monitoring and metering. We could now hand over the water licences for agriculture to the Agricultural Department who could approve or decline licences based on the current data. They have a greater knowledge of the industry both desktop and on ground.

Water licensing policy — defined as the development of operational level policy and rules to ensure the equitable sharing of water resources (the direct cost of this function was \$1,695,837 in 2008-09 and accounted for 5.6 FTEs); and

The above figures equate to \$302,828 per full time employee. The Department needs to be streamlined and review its level of staff and expenditure of tax payers money.

☐ If water licence and permit assessment fees were introduced, what do you consider to be an appropriate fee for a water licence or permit application?

Nil – The burden of cost is already high with compliance, construction and monitoring report fees.

Remove the onerous regulations and this will remove the costs to the taxpayers.

☐ Would you consider a risk-based model for determining water licence and permit application fees to be appropriate? If not, what basis could the department use to structure fees?

The first would be to determine the actual cost.

Economic Regulation Authority Effectiveness and Efficiency Review of the Department of Water 28 September 2010 tried to ascertain this however

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While direct costs reflect the actual number of FTEs assigned to each activity (through the allocation of projects), the FTE information provided by DoW corresponds to planned FTEs not actual staffing levels.

Extensive Data collection is collated and reported by the applicants at their cost – there should be no cost attributed by the DWER to this.

Risk costing will fail as the data is not factual and actual it is planned and guesstimated.

Time management skills and applications would need to be applied to the assessment process.

A complete breakdown of the process would have to be audited.

Cost of the bore drilling and equipment, maintenance cost of compliance- hydrological reports, monthly monitoring.

If this fee was introduced, then the cost of compliance hydrological reports would have to be recouped as the department would be using this information for its own financial gain.

What would be the likely impact on your business or industry if water licence and permit fees were introduced?

As you have extensively stated Costs have to be recovered. Businesses have overhead and running costs to cover just as Departments do. This would mean the increased price of product for the consumer and the reduction of staff in employment within the Company.

At many levels more regulatory fees and restrictions become the straw that broke the camels back and people walk away.

The flow on effect costs more to the community than currently understood.

If water licence and permit assessment fees were introduced, how could the collection of fees be timed to better support your business or industry? For example, would you benefit from paying fees up front, at the end of a licence assessment or annualised over the term of the licence?

In the event of common sense being lost and the fees implemented to ensure that we are not setting business up to fail due to unreasonable costs then annualised over the term of the licence would at least attempt to help with the set up costs.

Comments:

When water licences are granted and approved, at great cost to the individuals, a Property Right is given. Large infrastructure costs are expended based on that Property Right, you now wish to remove the Property Right given with no compensation by altering the rules and boundaries that exist.

Another nail in the coffin of productive agricultural enterprises.

Licensing should only be a way of monitoring water supplies not as a cash cow.

City owners currently pay for the supply of the water to their dwellings however water licence holders are forced to supply their own infrastructure at great cost, they must also upkeep and maintain the infrastructure.

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Do away with expensive repetition.

Claim raising of fees was not a profiteering exercise – Schedule of Income and Expenses by Service –

- Income 2017 all services \$99,425,000
Expenditure 2017 all services \$62,615,000
Profit \$36,810,000
- Interest revenue \$1,597,000 at a rate of 2% estimates a cash investment of approximately \$79,850,000

This whole policy seems to be in conflict with the Premiers recent statements

"The strawberry industry delivers major benefits to our economy and employs hundreds of Western Australians - they need our support and the best way to do that is to get out and buy WA strawberries."

"WA's strawberry industry provides about \$88 million a year into the State's economy and it is vital that Western Australians continue to support local growers, despite these incidents."

While these comments relate directly to the Strawberry industries it also can be applied broadly to all agriculture in the State.

'Western Australia's agriculture sector accounted for 2.4% of gross state product in the year to June 2017, and contributed 0.5% to WA's growth – more than any other industry. WA's agriculture sector experienced a 30.7% increase in gross value added (GVA) in the year to June 2017' Bankwest Focus on Agriculture Report.

Let's not kill the industry that is helping to keep Australia afloat. Bankwest Focus on Agriculture reflects that revenue from Agriculture for 2017 was \$63.4 billion to the economy. This is not what the individual farmer earns however, but it is what this country earns from their labours. Let's not make it even harder and be the straw that breaks the camels back.

Once this industry is gone it will take a very long time for it to come back and we will be reliant on overseas countries for our basic supplies.

Corporations and overseas investors who are currently purchasing our farming land and being given approvals for very large water usage and broad acre clearing will work solely on profits. No profits no industry.