



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

29-31 Skinner Street

South Grafton 2460

Phone/ Fax: 02 6643 1863

Web site: www.cec.org.au

E-mail: admin@cec.org.au

Date: 11th July 2012

Mr John Williams
Chairman
Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority

Dear Sir

Native Vegetation Act and Private Native Forestry Review

I have been asked to write to you on behalf of our members, detailing concerns with the consultation process for the above reviews.

On 5th July, the day prior to the latest information session, I was contacted by one of your personnel pointing out that we hadn't registered and asking if anyone from the Clarence Environment Centre planned to attend. I pointed out that we had been reluctant to do so because the previous two sessions had been highly unpleasant, and that they had degenerated into a forum for what I termed as "rednecks" to have a go at everything from the regulations, to 'greenies', and national parks.

I'm sure he understood, but assured me that our presence would be appreciated. I personally believed that that appreciation was because it would allow the CMA to "tick the box" that asks if the environment movement had been consulted, nevertheless, I and another Clarence Environment Centre member decided to attend.

As you were there, you will agree that it took less than half an hour for the meeting to be taken over by the loud, aggressive and obnoxious element I had referred to previously, with one attendee grasping the opportunity, with microphone in hand, to take over proceedings and declare, very loudly, that the NV Act was unconstitutional and illegal. He then refused to allow any of the officers to respond, simply by talking over the top of them.

The stand-off continued for several minutes and at the point where the man yelled "youse are a mob of crooks, liars and thieves", we made the decision to leave, commiserated with the CMA officer manning the entrance desk, and scratched our names off the attendance list.

This, as I explained earlier, was my third attendance at such meetings. The first had also ended in similarly acrimonious circumstances, with a Peter Spencer devotee blasting off a stream of abuse at the presenters.

At the second meeting things turned personal, and I was attacked (verbally) with one member of the audience claiming I had an agenda "to become a third consent authority". This because I'd had the temerity to suggest that a sign could be hung on a fence to assure passing members of the public that logging operations taking place were legal, and save them from reporting a possible illegal operation, and creating a subsequent need to investigate.

At stake apparently, which is leading to all this 'aggro', is the belief by some rural landowners, that because they own their land, they have a God-given right to do whatever they want with it. They are pathologically opposed to anyone or anything that attempts to regulate their activities, blaming it all on city dwelling greenies, corrupt administrations, and anyone else with an alternate view.

This over-simplistic, and highly selfish attitude completely ignores the fact that all land lies within a river catchment, and whatever a landowner does in that catchment, impacts on everyone living downstream, so these activities must be regulated.

Since this latest experience, we have received reports of similar unsavory meetings, with loud, aggressive, crowds of angry people creating a highly intimidatory atmosphere in which those with alternate views are rendered unwilling or unable to express those views for fear of becoming a target.

As a result, unless the CMA is willing to discuss these issues with our organisation, other conservation groups, and natural resource managers, in a forum that is free of all the intimidation, we will reluctantly decline any further invitations for involvement.

Yours sincerely

John Edwards
Honorary Secretary

Copies to: The Premier.
Minister for the Environment