



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE
(QLD) INC.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER'S OFFICE OF
NORTHERN QUEENSLAND INC.



BULLETIN – MAY 2003

A Great Leap Forward- Land-clearing moratorium announced by Premier Beattie while financial assistance negotiated

The Moratorium- In a long-needed measure to address the staggering rate of land-clearing in Queensland, Premier Beattie announced on Friday 16 May 2003 that as and from midday on 16 May 2003 no new land-clearing applications will be accepted until negotiations are concluded with the Commonwealth government on joint funding of a compensation package for landholders who have their land-clearing rights restricted. On 28 May 2003 the Vegetation (Applications for Clearing) Bill was introduced into State Parliament to give effect to the Premier's announcement and is expected to be passed by Parliament and become law shortly. However bear in mind that this change in legislation does not mean a moratorium on all land-clearing. Some clearing has never needed an application, so is unaffected. And under exemptions in the Bill, applications may still be accepted and processed if the land-clearing is for certain listed purposes, two examples of which are for projects of State significance or for necessary infrastructure where there is no alternative site.

The Ongoing Negotiations - A media release by Federal Environment and Heritage Minister David Kemp on Thursday 22 May 2003 notes that key elements of the joint Qld-Cth package are:

- The protection of 'of concern' regional ecosystems on freehold as well as leasehold land (apparently this will not apply to urban land);
- The phase out of remnant (non-regrowth) clearing by 2006 under a transitional cap of 500,000 hectares (apparently this will not apply to urban land, however we understand most importantly that this cap will include all applications already in the system prior to midday 16 May);
- The continued clearing of regrowth;
- The continuation of some exemptions, including for woody weed control, infrastructure development, fire breaks, legitimate forest practices, and fodder harvesting under permit; and
- A joint Commonwealth-Queensland adjustment package of up to \$150 million, comprising \$130 million for financial incentives to assist with the transition, \$12 million for incentives to improve management of valuable

remnant vegetation, and \$8 millions for incentives to develop best practice farm management plans (we understand that the Commonwealth contribution to this package is Greenhouse money negotiated by the Democrats with the Commonwealth as part of the GST package four years ago).

Community Consultation - Minister Kemp indicated that consultations on these key elements will occur shortly, with farming and industry groups, regional bodies, local government, the finance sector and conservation groups.

For more information contact EDO Qld, EDO NQ, or visit the Department of Natural Resources and Mines website at www.nrm.qld.gov.au/vegetation/applications.html For a copy of the Bill, go to <http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/Bills/50PDF/2003/VegApClearB03.pdf>

Upcoming Community Education Workshops in North Queensland

EDO-NQ will be visiting Townsville and Mission Beach during the weekend of June 28 - June 29 to run practical workshops for conservationists in the community. The workshops will focus on developing practical skills which should assist conservationists to use Queensland and Commonwealth law to protect the local environment. The workshops will cover the Integrated Planning Act, Vegetation Management Laws, Coastal Management Laws and possibly the EPBC Act.

For further details contact Joanna Cull on 40314766.

Bushland Protection Planning Appeal to be heard in Brisbane

On 16-20 June the Brisbane Planning and Environment Court will consider the fate of 5 hectares of bushland at Kenmore in an appeal lodged by the Mirbelia Street Action Group against a development approval by the Brisbane City Council. Developer Greymouth Pty Ltd had gained the approval for a material change of use and subdivision over the rural residential land which the Mirbelia Street Action Group will submit is part of the Green Space and contains an endangered regional ecosystem. Barrister Chris McGrath, planner Lochlan Mummery, ecologist Glyn Thomas and EDO Qld solicitors are part of the team assembled by the Action Group. You might recall that last year the same team defeated essentially the same application by Greymouth on a technicality.

For more information contact EDO Qld.

Queensland & Federal Governments Invite Comment on Landmark Great Barrier Reef Protection Plan

A little overshadowed by the land-clearing news, a momentous new initiative to protect the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef has been released in May by State and Federal Governments for community consultation. The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan's (RWQPP) stated goal is to halt and reverse the decline in water quality entering the Reef within ten years. The two objectives of the RWQPP which will support the achievement of the goal are to reduce diffuse

sources of pollutants in water entering the Reef and to rehabilitate and conserve areas of the Reef catchment that have a role in removing water borne pollutants. The RWQPP is based on developing partnerships and building on existing planning already underway in coastal and catchment areas. It seems that the RWQPP will influence existing planning systems at State, regional and local level to deliver a number of strategies and actions identified in the RWQPP. This will be accomplished through influencing planning guidelines, developing new codes of practice, supporting industry driven programs, promotion of national environmental management systems and best practice environmental management guidelines. Thus it can be seen that the Reef Plan will have a major impact on government planning and legislation. Perhaps the biggest issue from a planning perspective is that the draft RWQPP requires assessment of agricultural activities something environmentalists concerned about the reef have been seeking for many years.

A copy of the draft Reef Water Quality Protection Plan can be found at www.ea.gov.au/coasts or www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/reefwater or by phoning 1300 136 382. Submissions will close on 14 July 2003.

Staff Changes at EDO-NQ

As many EDO-NQ members would already know, EDO-NQ farewelled solicitor/policy officer, Matt Patterson, on 15 May. Matt has left Queensland indefinitely to travel through France with his partner Vanessa and we wish them both well. Matt worked with EDO-NQ for over two years and his skills, knowledge and dedication will be greatly missed. Matt will be replaced by Stephen Hall, an experience environmental litigation solicitor, who has been employed with the Environmental Defenders Office Tasmania for the past two and a half years. The EDO-Qld and EDO-NQ staff and management committee are all looking forward to working with Stephen.

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