

What can the Past tell us about the Future of Vegetation Management Protection in Queensland: A Political Discourse Analysis

Rowena Maguire¹ and Hope Johnson²

¹ *Queensland University of Technology, Faculty of Law, School of Law, International Law and Global Governance Research Program, 2 George St, Brisbane Queensland*

² *Queensland University of Technology, Faculty of Law, School of Law, International Law and Global Governance Research Program, 2 George St, Brisbane Queensland*

Abstract:

Land clearing is an emotive issue in Queensland and presents a serious environmental regulatory challenge. Contested understandings of land clearing in Queensland can be historically and socially situated in Queensland's approach to seeking independence from New South Wales. When Queensland sought independence from New South Wales, it did using 'a populate or perish strategy'. This strategy led to clearing of land as a means of showing settlement reflective of a Lockian labour theory of property. Queensland thus built its identity in part through the clearing of native fauna and flora. It is possible to identify four constructs within the land clearing debate, the landholder voice, the Green voice, the Indigenous voice and the Government voice. This nation building activity of land clearing, informs landholder discourses, which construct land clearing laws as an interference with freedoms and property rights. In contrast, the Greens emphasises the importance, in moral and economic terms, of the environmental services provided by vegetation. The Indigenous voice is less united seeing some advocates pushing for an easing of vegetation protection to enhance socio-economic conditions while others seek to protect native vegetation and care for country. The landholder, green and indigenous voice means that the State government construction changes in accordance with the party in power (Labour showing commitment to stop land clearing and the Liberal/National alliance favouring unrestricted landholder rights). The Federal government construction has remained constant in seeking to ban land clearing due to international commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the recent threat by UNESCO to list the Great Barrier Reef as endangered. This paper will use a political discourse method to expose the connections between language, ideologies, and the constructions of land clearing laws. This paper will explore how the Queensland government should act in the future to deal with the emotive issue of land clearing and explore the kinds of leadership necessary to end to broad scale land clearing in Queensland.

Keywords: Land clearing; Queensland; property rights; agriculture; environment; Vegetation Management; Discourse Analysis; Land Use Policy; Leadership.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Rowena Maguire is a senior lecturer and co-chair of the International Law and Global Governance research program within the Faculty of Law at QUT. Her work focuses on international and national climate and forest law with a focus on equitable design and implementation. She is currently a Chief Examiner on an ARC Discovery Project examining the integrity of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Hope Johnson is currently a research associate examining emission units as a form of property for the Commercial and Property Law Research Centre. She has submitted her PhD thesis on international agricultural law and food policy with the support of QUT, the International Law and Global Governance research program and the Institute for Future Environments. Hope's thesis critically analysed the international regulation of agriculture across international trade, environmental and human rights law.