

24 November 2009

Dear Clients

A few weeks ago I prepared a series of maps for various local delegates (Cooper Creek Catchment Committee, the Queensland Great Artesian Basin Advisory Committee and Agforce) to take with them to the recent Community Cabinet Meeting in Barcaldine.

The maps were of the Cooper Creek Catchment, specific to the Thompson River basin, to portray the amount of non-remnant/Category X PMAV and the potential magnitude of the impacts on them by the Wild Rivers legislation.

It was apparent, within the Cooper Creek Catchment, that the Wild Rivers Declaration has the potential to affect a minimum of approx. 1,907,116 Ha non-remnant vegetation, of which (as of 27/07/09) only 1,095,468 Ha had been "locked in".

It was also clear, based on the data available, that within the Thompson River Basin the Wild Rivers Declaration has the potential to affect a minimum of approx. 580,707 Ha non-remnant vegetation, of which (as of 27/07/09) only 377,701 Ha had been "locked in".

Prior to this Cabinet meeting, I had received much information from various official sources which stated that Wild Rivers Act would potentially override existing Category X on a PMAV. This also meant that, under the current legislation, the Wild Rivers Declaration could/would have enormous consequences for both individuals and Local Government Authorities alike in those non-remnant areas not presently secured.

As a result of discussions at the Barcaldine/Longreach Community Cabinet Meeting, Bill Bode (Tower Hill and Torrens Creek Landcare) has today forwarded me a letter from Michael Choi AM MP (Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Trade, Member for Capalaba) dated 16 November 2009, which states in part:

"The Queensland Government recognises that the Cooper Creek is a very different river system to those of previously declared wild river areas and it will ensure that the unique values and circumstances of the catchment and its community are considered.

The *Wild Rivers Act 2005* does not automatically override the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and the declaration of a Wild River High Preservation Area, does not of itself void an existing Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV).

While the legislation does provide discretion to the Director-General of the Department of Environment and Resource Management to seek to change areas in an existing PMAV in limited circumstances, the department does not consider that the declaration of a Wild River High Preservation Area represents such a trigger.

This is because the Director-General has advised that he considers a registered PMAV to constitute an 'existing authorisation' for the purposes of section 17 of the Wild Rivers Act. Under the Wild Rivers Act, such existing authorisations are not impacted by the declaration of a wild river or its High Preservation Area.

This recognises that the department has previously explicitly considered the PMAV prior to its registration, the appropriateness of mapping and the consequences of the PMAV categories for producers' ability to clear vegetation in accordance with the Vegetation Management Act.

I trust this addresses your concerns and the Queensland Government will continue to ensure that a wild river declaration will not impact on the ability to clear vegetation in a Category X PMAV."

Please contact me at Cosmic Desert (phone 07 47417249 or email enquiries@cosmicdesert.com.au) if you would like to see the above letter in its entirety, or if you want further information/clarification about any of the issues raised in this email.

Regards

Jeff Bucknell