

Protection Board a 'racket'

RURAL Lands Protection Boards must be the best money-making racket around, says a group of landowners dedicated to its overthrow. 'They even have the legal sanction of the state Labor government,' say Landowners for the Abolition of the Rural Protection Levy (LARPL).

'All over NSW, landowners are receiving notices demanding that amounts from around \$30 and upwards be handed over to the local Rural Lands Protection Board. If you don't pay they threaten to seize your property. And the

Labor government lets them charge 10% interest on unpaid rates.

'Many people scratch their heads and wonder what it is all about. They have no livestock and often spend their own money, with no help from the government, restoring and re-forestation degraded land. And they never see anyone from the so-called Protection Board out there doing anything useful. They feel ripped off.

'Small landowners are also angered by the total exemption for the sugarcane industry. Farmers with

multi-million dollar sugarcane farms pay nothing to the Boards. Why? Because their industry association lobbied the Minister for Agriculture some years ago and he gave in. So why does he leave small landowners to be targeted by these Boards?

'The Boards are supposed to help rural landowners eradicate feral animals, rabbits, wild dogs and feral pigs and to assist livestock farmers on veterinary matters. The local Board employs two full-time rangers, but no landowner yet contacted has ever seen one. The rates extorted from landowners

are mostly chewed up keeping three office staff in relaxed, air-conditioned luxury in their ratepayer-funded \$3/4 million Taj Mahal in Lismore.'

LARPL, which includes landowners Russell Preston of Middle Pocket and Howard Furner of Goonengerry, wants the government to abolish the Boards or dramatically reform them.

In response local Rural Lands Protection Board administrative officer, Reg Timbrell, challenged critics to put their names forward for the next election of Directors in late 2001.

Mr Timbrell said, 'It is very easy, if you don't feel disposed towards an authority of some type or other, to make innuendos and snide remarks about the staff of the organisation, and the fact that they work in an air conditioned office, because it's always possible to provoke an element of jealousy with those sort of comments.'

Rural Lands Protection Boards are Statutory authorities, which operate under the Rural Lands Protection Act and have been in existence (under numerous governments) since the late 19th Century.

'They have played a significant role in agriculture, and in protecting the rural environment from many problems during that time,' Mr Timbrell said.

'I've owned my 30 acres of steep forest land for 20 years', said Mr Preston of LARPL, 'and I've never seen anyone from the Board inspecting for feral animals or offering advice or help; and I've never seen any rabbits or wild dogs either.'

continued on page 2

Bamboo carving Sunny style



Jeff Dawson

WHILE there have been heaps of attempts to develop environmentally friendly surfboard materials over the last ten years or so, who really gives a bugger?

No surfer is going to sacrifice performance for greenhouse brownie points. The really important green principles are those concerned with the entry into, and delayed exit from, the elusive green room.

Byron board shaper Frank McWilliams has refined a surfer/enviro friendly high performance Bamboo skinned surfboard. Since the late fifties surfboards have been made by wrapping fibreglass cloth around styrene foam blanks strengthened by a wooden stringer and held together with epoxy resin.

McWilliams has been experimenting with Bamboo laminates, the strongest natural material on earth (and

water) and extremely light with extraordinary flotation qualities.

The wafer thin sheets of bamboo replace the glass cloth. The strength of the bamboo negates the need for a stringer resulting in lightness and incredible flex. If you've ever snow skied you'll know the feeling of push flex gives you out of turns.

The test pilot is Hawaiian power surfer, Sunny Garcia,

continued on page 2

available. Send cheques or money orders to Susan Perrow's Nobuntu Fund, 64 Brandon St, Suffolk Park.

LPB 'racket'

From front page

His sentiments were echoed by Mr Furner who surveyed cattle farmers a few years back. 'I spoke to 50 farmers at the Lismore cattle auctions. When I asked what they thought of the Boards, 48 of them said they're just a bunch of bludgers.'

'If the government won't abolish them, we want the same treatment as the sugarcane industry', Mr Preston said. 'They apparently do their own feral animal control, so let landowners who have nothing to do with livestock pay a levy to Landcare. If livestock farmers want to keep the Boards, let them fund them.'

'They don't protect the land in any meaningful way,' Mr Furner added, 'they just protect their own jobs.'

'If LARPL are genuine in their criticism of the Board', said Mr Timbrell, 'and they genuinely believe that they can manage the Board's affairs better than the current Board is doing, perhaps they may consider nominating for the next election of Directors which is due in the latter part of 2001.'

'The election will be advertised well beforehand and nominations sought. Provided these critics are actually ratepayers to the Board, and that they have sufficient commitment to their stance, then I expect that their names will be forthcoming at that time.'

To find out more about LARPL's campaign, phone 6684 1119, 6684 9208, or 07 3844 5040.