

*with contributions as noted*

## **Carbon Sequestration**

With very little fanfare, a Bill has been introduced to the Queensland Parliament, to provide a formal system of creating profits a prendre in "natural resource products", including carbon sequestration. At this stage, the system only applies to freehold land, but this may later be extended to Crown land. The Bill is entitled the *Forestry and Land Title Amendment Bill 2001*. The Bill is only a few pages long, and has been kept as simple as possible.

The system is that a freehold landowner can enter an agreement granting various rights to a "benefited person" in relation to "natural resource products", including stored carbon and carbon sequestration in trees or other vegetation. If the land is mortgaged, a mortgagee's consent is required.

The Bill does not purport to limit or override landowners' existing powers to enter into agreements about natural resource products, and it does not create interests in land. It is understood that the purpose was merely to provide a statutory registration framework. Therefore, it should not be of concern to anyone with existing agreements.

The Minister for Natural Resources, Stephen Robertson, explained in a press release that the Timber Taskforce had reported that investors had enquired about the availability of carbon credit trading rights in Queensland, and that one of the expected benefits of the legislation was to attract investment to Queensland.

There are a few minor errors in the Bill which hopefully will be addressed before enactment, eg, the references to "a tree or vegetation". What is a tree, if not a type of vegetation?

## **IPA "Operational" Review**

The Department of Local Government and Planning is currently carrying out a formal stakeholder consultation process for proposed amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997, with the objective of achieving enactment before the end of this year. Substantial consultation occurred last year, but the original timetable was interrupted by a variety of obstacles, including the State election.

## **New Appointment**

James Purtill has been appointed as the new Director-General of the Queensland EPA.

## **Workplace Asbestos Laws**

Changes to the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997* relating to asbestos materials in workplaces came into effect on 1 November 2000. The new laws apply to buildings (or parts of buildings) that are workplaces and were built (or given building approval) before 1 January 1990.

The legislation provides for two compliance periods:

- for buildings built or given building approval before 1 January 1980, the compliance period is from 1 November 2000 until 31 October 2002; and
- for buildings built or given building approval between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 1989, the compliance period is from 1 November 2002 to 31 October 2004.

During the compliance period, building owners must obtain an asbestos materials report and, if asbestos is found, must maintain an asbestos materials register and control exposure to the asbestos.