

LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

An irregular one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy

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Lex Declares Independence At Rainbow Creek, Gippsland

Independence from Victoria! Independence from Australia!

In 1979, a bunch of landowners led by one George Barnes declared their independence from Victoria, and from Australia. As the Independent State of Rainbow Creek they lodged a secession document with the Governor of Victoria and the Governor-General of Australia.



The independent State of Rainbow Creek issued stamps, banknotes and even passports.

Lex was reluctant to lend his name to the rebellion, until he learned that the new State would remain loyal to the British Empire, and its anthem would be 'God Save the Queen.' Buckingham Palace was duly informed, but HMQ's response is not recorded.

Barnes' real grievance was not with the Governor, nor with the Governor General, but with the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. And with the Thomson River.

The good old SRWSC had either caused the Thomson to change course, or had failed to prevent it from changing course of its

own volition. Either way, Rainbow Creek now traversed the Gippsland landscape where there had been no Rainbow Creek before.

And, before re-joining the Thomson further downstream, it went right through the middle of Barnes' and his neighbours' properties.

Those affected had to pay rates to the local council for land which was now underwater, because their title deeds did not show the existence of the creek. They had to pay a second levy to the SRWSC for using creek waters for irrigation purposes, and a third levy to the Thomson River Improvement Trust which was failing to prevent further erosion by the creek.

The Thomson continued to flow down its previous channel, albeit with a reduced torrent. This just served to further aggrieve the dissidents: they had lost land to one branch of the watercourse, but gained nothing in exchange. And they needed to build bridges to get to their own bottom paddocks - bridges which required consents from the SRWSC!

All around the State rivers continue to change course. Forty years on, we still don't have a system for reconfiguring the riparian cadastre. Crown 'water frontage' reserves are high and dry, private farms are inundated. CMAs and Landcare groups struggle on ...

George Barnes has since departed the scene. His micro-nation has been re-absorbed into Victoria and Australia. As for HMQ, Lex doesn't know whether she is pleased or displeased.

See you there! Lex Loci