

Dear members of 'Keep Corang Open!' Facebook group,

This letter is written on behalf of the owners of 396 Crags Road, Wog Wog.

We thought it was appropriate to reach out to this group and provide some details about the property, our history with the property and to correct some inaccuracies that have been communicated about this situation.

Firstly, this property is not owned by a big corporation or developer, it is owned by a small group of families that were looking for a beautiful & peaceful piece of rural land to enjoy with their kids, have fires at night, swim in a river, look at the stars and generally enjoy nature.

Contrary to some comments we've heard from visiting bushwalkers, the land was not sold from Crown Land a "few years ago". As far as we know, the land was held privately as Leasehold Land from around 1942 (which provided all the rights of private property to the Leasehold owner) and was maintained as a part of a large rural land holding. It was converted to Freehold land in 2011 and remained as a part of the main farm until 2018. We purchased the property through a local real estate agent in 2018, nearly 5 years ago. Any access across the walking track to Corang Lagoon since 1942 could have been deemed as trespassing, although it appears it was not enforced effectively – or perhaps not at all. At the time of purchasing, we were made aware of bushwalkers using the land without the permission of the owner. We subsequently sought legal advice prior to the purchase in order to understand our rights and liabilities.

Many of our first encounters with bushwalkers in early 2018 were enjoyable and informative and we were surprised to discover that many of the bushwalkers were unaware that the walking track through our property was not National Park land. However, after discovering the presence of camping, fires, litter and some human waste on our property, we were left with little choice but to do something. As we mentioned we have kids, and we want them to feel safe on the property and not be confronted by strangers questioning how they had got there each time they go for a swim or explore the property. On one occasion our young teenage daughters were confronted by a naked man. So we did what any landowner is rightfully entitled to do, we erected "Private Property" signs, accompanied by "No Camping", "No Fires" and some "No Trespassing" signs. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for our signs to be removed and stolen.

In December 2019, the Morton National Park was subject to extensive bushfires, that also burnt through our whole property including suffering some element of property damage. This was a daunting period and highlighted the need clearly to us for safety when it comes to fires on our property.

Later in 2020, we decided to erect some minor fencing and more "No Trespassing" signs to reduce the risk of fires and strangers on the property. Again, to our dismay, these fences were taken down and the signs stolen, making it confusing for walkers to know that they were not on public land.

We have read the letter that is displayed at the Wog Wog campground, and we would like to address some of the concerning inaccuracies that it implies:

We are not secret owners

In October 2020, our western neighbour was approached by [REDACTED], who requested our contact details. Our neighbour instead provided [REDACTED]'s contact details to us, and we rang him soon after and had a conversation about the property. This was a civil conversation, however it was made very clear to [REDACTED] that it was private property and that we did not want unauthorised persons walking on it, that we wanted our privacy and that we wanted our children to feel safe. It is not that we did not answer [REDACTED], he just did not get the answer he was after and therefore appears to claim that there has been no communication.

We have had many conversations with bushwalkers on our property (always courteous) to try to educate people that the property is actually private. We have never directed people to leave, but have requested that they not camp or make fires, and to stick to the Corang Peak walking track in future to avoid the private property. We note that most maps display our property in a different colour to the National Park but still many bushwalkers claim to be unaware that they are on private property. To avoid this confusion we also suggested to NPWS to place a sign at the Wog Wog campground so bushwalkers could be informed that the area was private land in advance, and avoid having to turn back to the Corang Peak walking track. The NPWS understood our concerns and subsequently placed a sign at the Wog Wog campground.

Recreation, conservation & subdivision

We are proud to be the owners of such a beautiful property that contains precious items such as the historic water races and some rare plants, such as the Nerriga Grevillea. We are currently liaising with NPWS to host them onto our property for the purposes of logging any confirmed existence of this flora.

We are also actively keeping bees on the property and collecting honey.

We have no intention to subdivide this property, and our main use of the property, besides beekeeping, is nature-loving. Any mention of dog kennels, paintball games areas, new suburbs, etc, in the letters we have seen, are purely scare tactics. While we are owners, this will never happen.

Over the past year, certain people have engaged tactics tantamount to harassment and intimidation. This has included [REDACTED] trespassing further into our property to leave notes with his contact details (that we already have). We asked the local police to talk to [REDACTED] to please 'cease and desist' this harassment, and specifically informed the Police that we did not wish to pursue down a prosecution path at that stage. [REDACTED] is clearly a nature-lover like us and someone, as a [REDACTED] that has a high-standing in the community and despite his passionate views, we wish him no harm.

However, last December, we had many public notices put up on power poles around our private suburban homes (hundreds of kilometres from Wog Wog) in an attempt to intimidate. We even had a young daughter approached in one of our homes with a request to "speak to our parents". This can only be interpreted as harassment and our children are now quite alarmed.

There are no access restrictions to the Budawangs due to the private property signs and fences and the Corang Lagoon itself can be accessed from the National Park side. We request that our privacy be respected and that this group be reassured that absolutely no harm will come to this area under our ownership.