

# THE CHANGING LAWS AFFECTING FREEHOLD TITLE IN AUSTRALIA

## Tower of Hope Speaking Tour Perth Meeting

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010  
Time: 8pm – 10pm  
Venue: Building 210 Room101  
The Elizabeth Jolley Lecture Theatre  
Curtin University  
Kent Street  
Bentley



### Peter Spencer

His great grandfather took up 'Maragie' in the Australian Alps in the 1830's. This property was taken by the NSW government and disappeared into the Kosciusko National Park in the 1970's. Peter bought the highest farm in Australia, the 20,000 acre 'Saarahnlee' as a replacement in 1980, and immediately set about developing it as an eco-farming showplace.

He soon came into conflict with the Native Vegetation Act. He was unable to clear trees beneath his new wind turbines, and he was refused permission to graze his sheep, or even to grow trout. Eventually the entire property was 'blighted' and he was left unviable and uncompensated.

In the final act of courage Peter climbed a tower and staged a hunger protest for 52 days, to have the unjust legislation brought to the attention of the public.

### Janet & Matt Thompson

Matt and Janet spent more than a year getting environmental approvals to begin their Narrogin Feed Lot Project; Approvals were finally given for a 15,000 head feedlot 4.5 kilometres south of the Narrogin townsite, in a rural zoning. The Thompsons then proceeded to build the feedlot to 10,000 head capacity, hired upwards of 20 full time equivalent employees, and purchased close to \$10 million worth of inputs annually, mostly from local farmers.

When they applied to operate the final stage of development (up to 15,000 head of cattle as originally planned and approved), with the ongoing support of local government and local people, the state's Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) changed the rules of the game. Because a vocal minority (fewer than 20) complained about odour, the DEC increased licence conditions from 8 to a draconian 33, and limited throughput to 6,000 head.

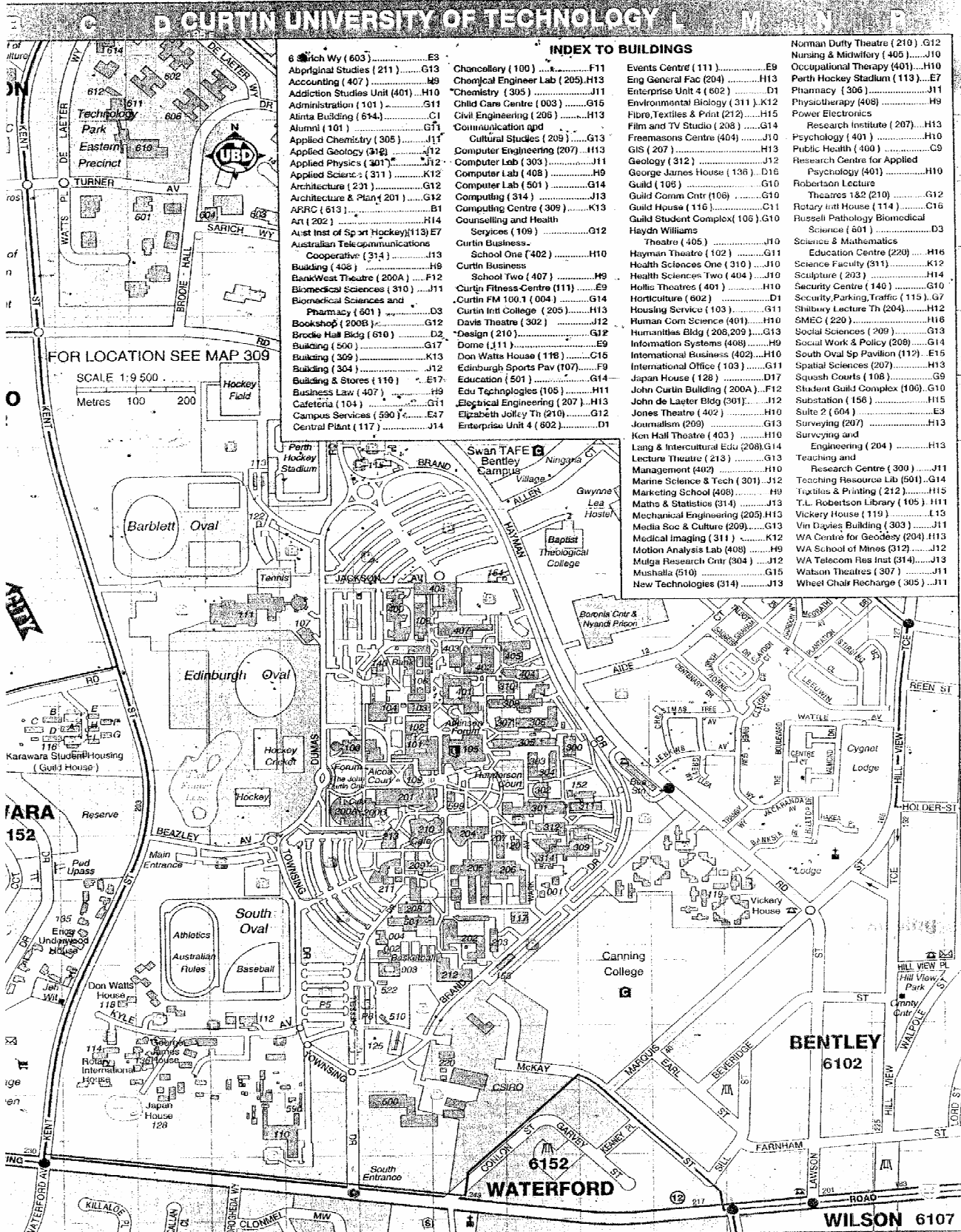
This was an untenable position and the Thompson's told regulators on numerous occasions that they could not cash flow the investment at the reduced occupancy rate. The same Government Department that had given them approval in 2002 shut them down anyway. The business now lies empty and quiet. No employees, no economic activity, and no end to their battle in sight.

### Maxwell Szulc

A battler, Mr Szulc, 62, sheared sheep and worked the mines, developing his (or what he THOUGHT was his) block of land near Esperance in WA as time and money permitted. He cleared regrowth on his land, most recently 40 hectares of fire breaks, after an injunction was sought by DEC to keep Mr Szulc from using his property. It was these 40 hectares of firebreak that landed Mr Szulc in prison. When the laws change in such a way that good, productive members of society are outside the law, then that is bad law.

**We invite you to come along and listen and to ask questions of those affected by the changes in law pertaining to freehold title. If these changes don't affect you at the moment, we believe they soon will. It is important that the wider community be made aware of the challenges ahead and of the injustices being done to a minority in the name of 'the common good'.**

Jointly sponsored by the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the WA Property Rights Association Inc.



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