

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Native Vegetation Senate Inquiry

In regard to the current inquiry I strongly feel that the Government laws are prejudiced against the working Farmers of Australia. The current Native Vegetation Laws do not acknowledge or respect the ownership or custodianship or management practices of Farmers. For example a good productive Farmer who keeps his land free of weeds, the waterways clean, manages his farm in a productive yet sustainable manner can be hounded by Government officials because he is simply carrying out management practices which are necessary to his livelihood and actually good for the economy.

The current Native Vegetation laws seem to being viewed in isolation to the whole ecological climate of the farm. For example – Government officials tell farmers they have “Illegally cleared” land when there has been naturally occurring events such as fire and wind storms which cause management problems for Workers carrying out the day to day tasks necessary to the keeping of livestock and managing pastures.

These same officials do not look at the fact that the same farmer may have already been actively engaged in Landcare and Rivercare and has fenced off waterways, prevented and controlled erosion of the riverine environment, undertaken extensive fire reduction measures to prevent those naturally occurring events wrecking such havoc on his land.

In respect to family owned farms - and in our case land that has been in the family since 1875 the Government does not have the knowledge that we do. If were indigenous people there would be acknowledgment and respect given to us for our knowledge, yet we are discriminated against because we actually believe we know our farm better than the Government Officials do who are forcing these unrealistic laws upon us.

If the Government believes that it is better at farming and managing our farms then we are (and by this I refer to a farm in its entirety - not some small pocket of vegetation) than you should buy the farm from us at a price we believe it is worth.

I have already seen first hand what has happened when Government incentives and laws have resulted in large grazing properties being sold to be planted down to tree plantations. For example - three years ago the trees were sprayed - the chemicals were mixed a metre from a creek and 300metres from a major river. That area beside the creek still has not grown a blade of grass or a weed. How much chemical went in to the water? Not very responsible management. Yes, you will blame the contractor. But as a Government you initiated this type of land use.

Government has condoned this type of land practice (you promote it for carbon trade

offs). Another example – in the same area 4000 acres of land has been contoured and planted with trees – these contours are harvesting the water which should have been going into the river system – there is no way 600 cows and calves would use that much water.

We believe we are responsible Land Managers - we actually producing beef that is being exported as well as for domestic consumption and you must appreciate how enraged we become and how discouraged we are when we see such waste of Government money and resources. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is a prime example. Staff driving 200 km each day to clean toilets and mow a patch of grass in a National Park – they drive brand new vehicles. Yet when it comes to hazard reduction in the National Park or control of weeds or feral animals – it doesn't happen.

Basically the Governments track record is not good. You play to the masses and ignore the farmers who are feeding you. How would you like it if I came into your backyard and told you not to use your vegetable garden because I wanted you to plant trees on it which I thought would be better for the environment – too bad if those vegetable were feeding your family! How would you feel about the rights of ownership! And there is more...if you don't stop using your vegetable garden and plant those trees we will fine you or take you to court. However, you can take the option of not using your front yard and turn it to a park. Discrimination at its best!

Your current policies are undermining the stability of Rural Australia. You can bring all the immigrants, or managers or off shore investors you like but the harsh reality is that these people will never be able to farm Australia in the productive and sustainable way that we can. Have a look at how many farms are for sale – a sign that many of them have had enough. I am sure that your departments will have access to the number of farm related suicides. Don't think that your policies don't effect us. Start listening and start looking at who is polluting the country – we should not have to pay for your poor management.